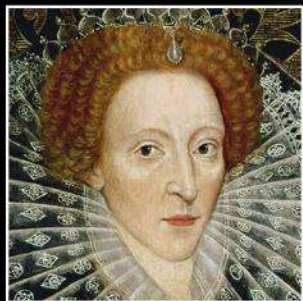


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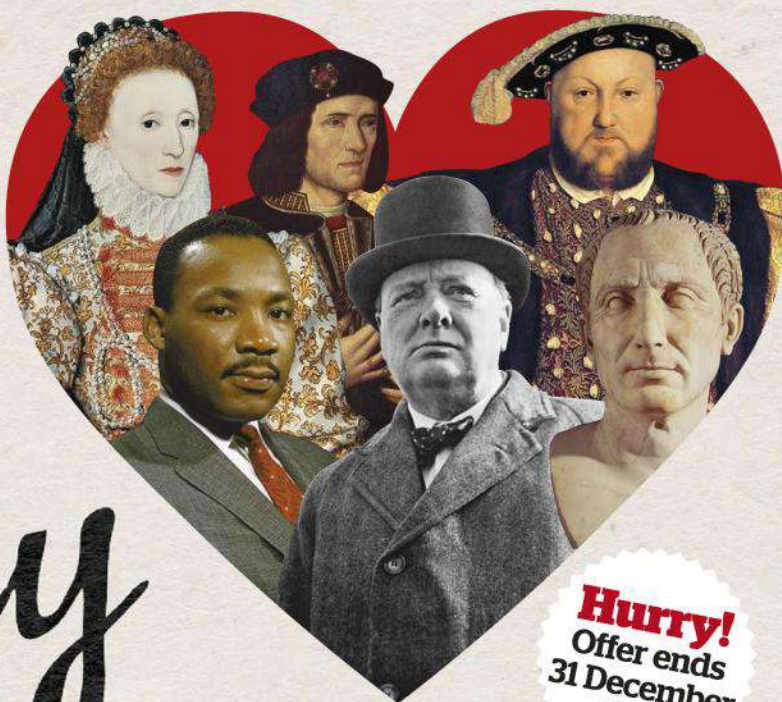
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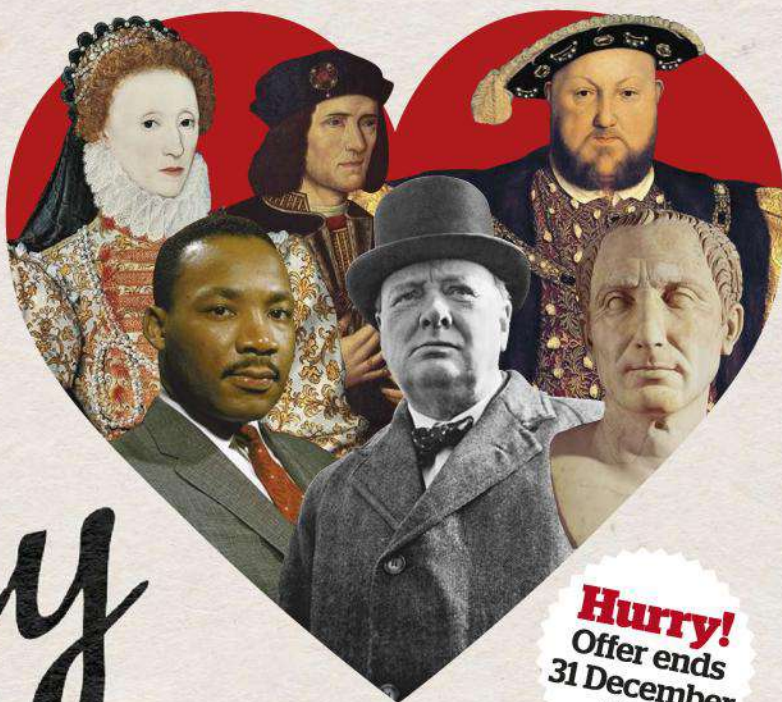
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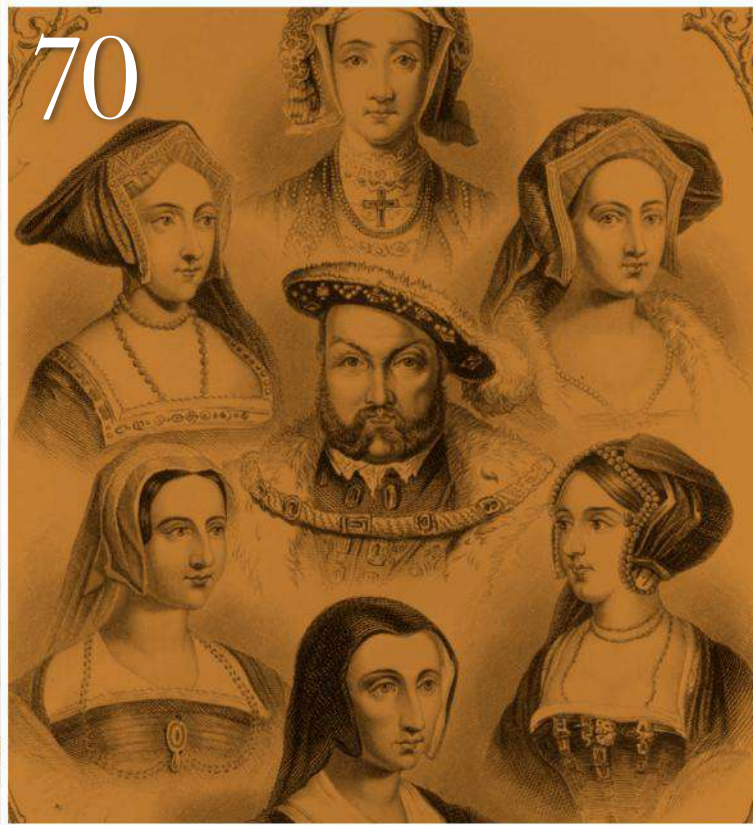
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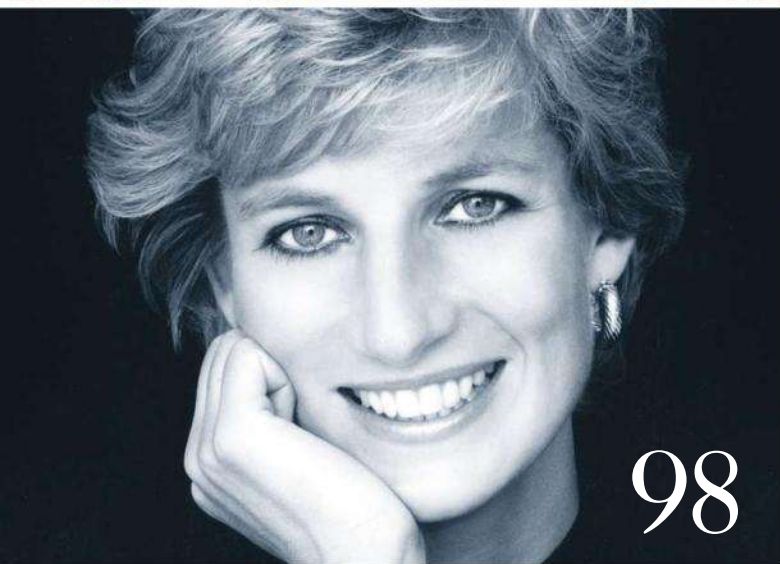
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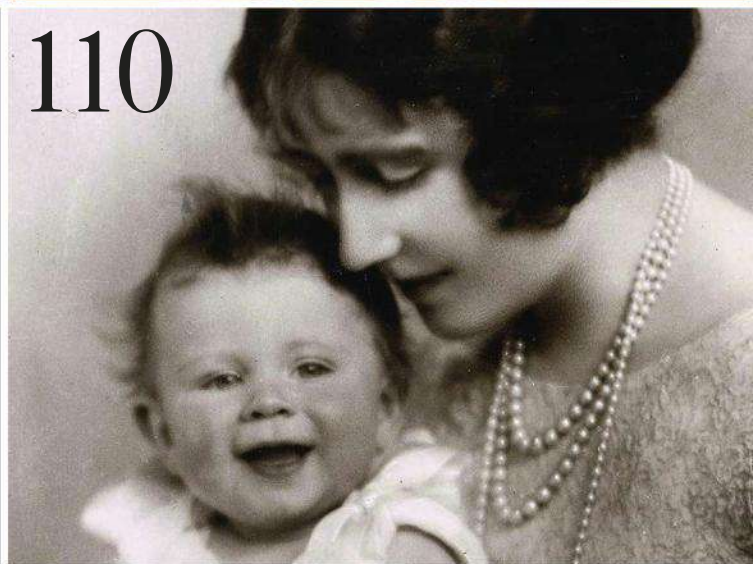
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From warrior queens to quiet radicals

*Acclaimed Tudor historian **Tracy Borman** explains how the roles of Britain's royal women have changed greatly over the centuries*

“**I** know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman,” Elizabeth I told her troops at Tilbury Docks as they awaited a fresh onslaught from the Spanish Armada in August 1588, “but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too.” This famous line, and the apparent regret with which she uttered it, suggests that she shared the views of most

of her contemporaries about the natural ‘womanly weakness’ to which it was believed her sex was subject. Throughout her reign, she referred to herself time and again in masculine terms in order to assert her authority. That she felt compelled to do so says a great deal about the perception of royal women – even those who, like Elizabeth, reigned supreme.

This prejudice had been deeply ingrained into the psyche of the monarch’s subjects for centuries. It was not

GETTY IMAGES / ALAMY

just confined to that rarity, the queen regnant (a queen ruling in her own right, of which there have been just seven since 1066, compared to 36 kings), but to queens consort (wives of ruling kings), other royal ladies and, indeed, women at all levels of society.

For much of history, women were viewed as intellectually, emotionally and even physically inferior to men. As such, they were thought incapable of operating effectively within anything other than the domestic or religious spheres of life. While it was acceptable for royal ladies to gain renown for acts of piety or for the generosity of their benefactions to religious houses, most male commentators were deeply uncomfortable with the notion of female power. The role of consorts was to produce heirs, lead a pious life and keep a low profile. If they showed any independence of spirit or strayed into the political arena, then they were lambasted as schemers and traitors.

Often, royal women became scapegoats for the shortcomings of their husbands: it was much easier for a chronicler to criticise the actions of a king by blaming them on his wife. The early medieval chronicles are riddled with salacious stories of wicked seductresses and adulteresses. The formidable Eleanor of Aquitaine and Isabella of France would both pay a high price for attempting to assert their authority in a world of men. Eleanor was imprisoned for 16 years (from 1173–89) by her husband, Henry II, for supporting their sons in a rebellion against him. A century and a half on, Isabella, later referred to as the ‘She-Wolf’, wrested power from her dangerously ineffective husband, Edward II, but was eventually forced to step down by their son, Edward III.

If there was any sign of trouble in a marriage, the immediate conclusion drawn was that the wife was an evil, sex-crazed temptress who had bewitched and deceived her unfortunate husband. One chronicler told how William the Conqueror once returned to France from England to discover his wife, Matilda, had been unfaithful to him, so he tied her to a horse’s tail and paraded her naked around the streets of Caen as punishment.

Even more common – and in some respects more damaging – than the blatant anti-feminism and character assassination that royal women suffered in historical accounts through the centuries has been a tendency to

disregard them altogether. All too often, while the actions of male protagonists are explored in detail, those of their consorts, daughters or other female associates are afforded little or no mention. The picture that emerges of the role and importance of royal women to the life of the nation is therefore often extremely distorted.

But if women generally, and royal women in particular, have often been given a bad press, those who have conformed to the ideal image of a consort, daughter or even mistress have been lauded to the skies. Thus, for example, Jane Seymour has gone down in history as the only wife whom Henry VIII truly loved because she was meek and compliant – in stark contrast to her predecessor, the ‘Great Whore’ Anne Boleyn. Better still, Jane fulfilled the most important function of all royal women by giving birth to a male heir. Even Queen Victoria, who epitomised Britain as a mighty and stridently self-confident nation, deferred to her beloved consort, Albert, and was left floundering by his death.

Other royal women have found ways to work within the establishment, outwardly conforming to the ideal stereotype while covertly exerting their authority. Recent research has proved that Edward I’s queen, Eleanor of Castile, wielded considerable political influence by promoting advisors and planting ideas that would later take hold in her husband’s mind.

Often in history it is possible to trace a gradual progression to what we would consider a more ‘enlightened’ state of being. Women’s movements, such as the suffragettes, achieved much greater equality for women in general, but not necessarily for those within the royal family. In recent memory, Princess Diana’s marriage to Prince Charles unravelled in spectacular fashion when she refused to conform to the expectations of a royal wife. By contrast, her daughter-in-law, Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, has won widespread admiration for fulfilling those expectations with charm and good grace.

The current sovereign, Elizabeth II, has been a model of queenly duty and conformity throughout her long reign. But, by giving women equal rights with men in the succession for the first time in history, she has achieved a shift so radical that its repercussions will be appreciated by royal women for centuries to come. ■

The immediate
conclusion drawn
from a troubled royal
marriage was that
the wife was an evil,
sex-crazed temptress

RULING

THE WOMEN WHO SAT ON THE THRONE

+ **BOUDICA**, the warrior queen who fought against the Roman empire

+ How **MARY I** blazed a trail for future female monarchs

+ The Tudor queen **ELIZABETH I** – a formidable or frail monarch?

+ The challenges that **VICTORIA** overcame to rise to the throne

+ **ELIZABETH II** – how she became the royal family's greatest survivor

QUEEN VICTORIA

She reigned for 63 years, but Victoria's passage to the throne was far from easy, thanks mainly to her own mother

QUEENS



GETTY





QUEEN BOUDICA SCOURGE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

VANESSA COLLINGRIDGE tells the story of the woman who raised and led a native army in revolt against oppressive Roman rule in Britain in AD 60

IMMORTAL WARRIOR

The rebellion of tribes in AD 60 was a serious threat to the mighty Roman empire. It earned its leader Boudica a reputation that has endured for two millennia, commemorated in this sculpture at Westminster

OPPOSITE PAGE:

This coin, dating from c61 AD, is believed by some to show Boudica's likeness



A freedom fighter, the woman who almost drove the Romans out of the country, Boudica is one of the most iconic queens of Britain. Despite being one of the first 'British' women mentioned in history, there is no direct evidence that she even existed. Instead, we have to rely on the accounts of two classical authors, Tacitus and Cassius Dio, both writing decades after the alleged battles between Boudica's rebel army and their new Roman overlords. Their accounts were constructed with a specific political agenda, and a Roman audience, in mind but they are the only references we have. We don't even know her real name: Boudica derives from *bouda*, the ancient British word for victory.

Any biography of the warrior queen is therefore a marriage of the classical histories with limited and circumstantial archaeological evidence. From these fragmentary sources, and what we know about Iron Age and early Roman Britain, we can weave together some of the strands of this woman's achievements.

Boudica first appears in the historical record of AD 60 after the death of her husband, Prasutagus, ruler of the Iceni people. They lived in an area covering modern-day Norfolk, north Suffolk and north-east Cambridgeshire. Prasutagus had become a 'client king' of the Romans shortly after they had invaded Britain in AD 43, allowed to keep his lands in exchange for supporting the Romans politically and paying them dues as a tribal leader.

Prasutagus would doubtless have been granted Roman citizenship, along with his wife and two young daughters. As a client queen, chances are that Boudica would therefore have been a wine-drinking, fine-dining and possibly even Latin-speaking aristocrat, with her future, and that of her daughters, assured in relative luxury.

According to Tacitus, the trouble began when Prasutagus died having bequeathed only half his wealth to the Roman emperor, Nero: the other half was signed over not to Nero or even to Boudica, but to his two young

daughters. His reasons for doing this were unclear. Perhaps he was attempting to shore up the girls' dynastic claim to rule the Iceni; perhaps he didn't trust Boudica to support the Romans; perhaps he was trying to show his tribe that he was not a puppet leader of a foreign invader. The result was catastrophic. The Romans looted his palace, sacked his kingdom, enslaved his relatives and stripped all Iceni chiefs of their ancestral lands.

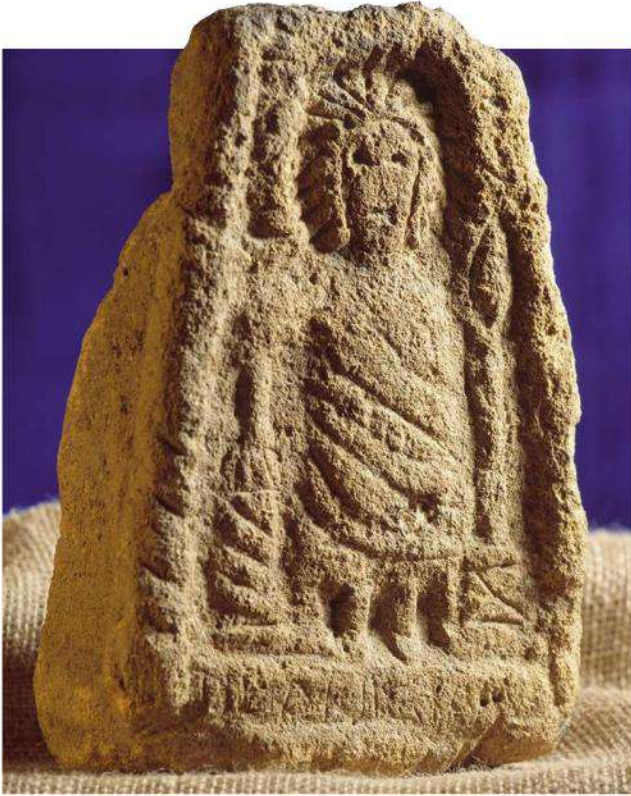
There was worse to come: the Romans flogged Boudica and gang-raped the young princesses. For a Roman audience, this defilement of the ruling class, Roman or Briton, was reprehensible; for the Iceni, Boudica was not just a queen, she was also a priestess and possibly the embodiment of their goddess Andraste. This was more than a violation of their earthly leaders – the rapes and floggings desecrated the Iceni's entire culture and system of beliefs.

The historian Cassius Dio gives a different root cause to the events that followed, focusing instead on the sudden recall of substantial Roman loans to tribal leaders, leaving them humiliated and in serious financial crisis. Whatever the trigger, the Iceni had a motive for rebellion; all they needed was a leader. Into this space stepped the outraged Boudica – a symbol that though they might be bruised, they still had their dignity, and it was time to fight back.

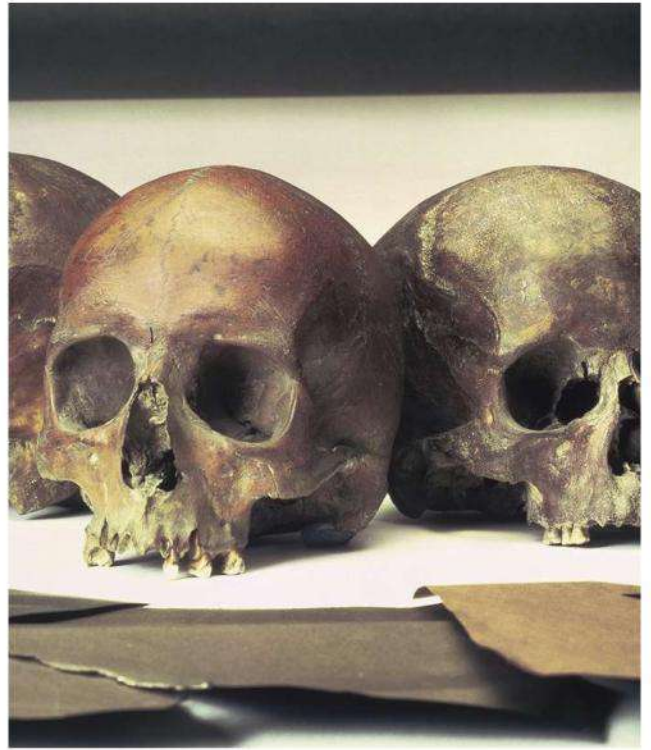
Boudica wasn't the first Iron Age warrior queen to lead her people to war. Cartimandua, the first British woman to be named in the historical record, ruled the bellicose Brigantes tribe in what is now the north of England. Meanwhile, at Chedworth Roman villa in the county of Gloucestershire a portable Roman altar depicts a spear-wielding goddess entitled 'Dea Regina' – Queen Goddess.

With such earthly and divine sanction, Boudica plotted the Iceni's revenge on their Roman overlords, aided by her southern neighbors, the Trinovantes. They were the first native Britons to sign a treaty with Rome – in 54 BC after Julius Caesar's second attempt to invade. But that treaty was about to be broken: they, too, had seen their

The Iceni had a motive for rebellion; all they needed was a leader. Into this space stepped the outraged Boudica – it was time to fight back



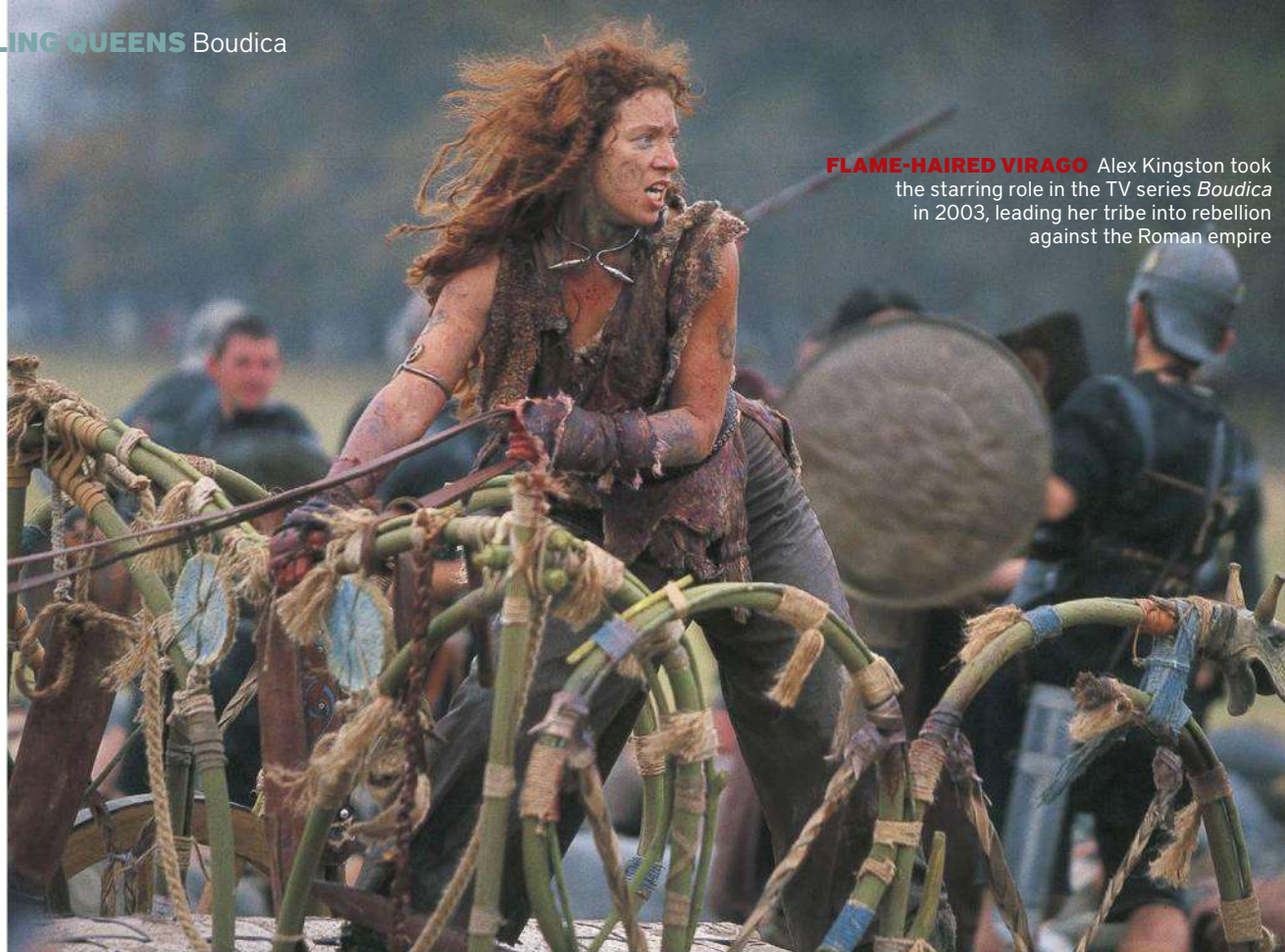
A QUEEN GODDESS Boudica was a goddess as well as a queen to her people, a concept the Romans would have understood, as shown by this portable altar depicting their own queen goddess of war, Minerva, holding a spear



BOUDICA'S VICTIMS? A burned layer in the towns she sacked is thought to be evidence of Boudica's uprising, and these skulls found in London may be those of victims unable to leave when the Iceni attacked in AD 60



SHOW NO MERCY The vicious sack of Londinium by Boudica's warriors, in a Museum of London re-creation. The savagery and slaughter reflected the Romans' own previous treatment of the queen's family and her Iceni tribe



FLAME-HAIRED VIRAGO Alex Kingston took the starring role in the TV series *Boudica* in 2003, leading her tribe into rebellion against the Roman empire

lands devastated. Their former capital, Camulodunum (modern-day Colchester), had been taken by the Romans as the seat of their new administration, with tribal lands redistributed to retired Roman soldiers. Even worse, the Trinovantes had been ordered to pay for, and build, a gigantic new temple to the Emperor Claudius. As fermenting hatred exploded into fury, Boudica gained her army.

The campaigning season of AD 60 saw the Roman forces busy in the western fringes of Britannia as they battled to suppress the political power of the druids on Anglesey. Boudica took her chance and swept down to destroy the very heart of Roman Britain. Tacitus calls the uprising a “sudden revolt”, suggesting it caught the Romans unawares. After years of collaboration, there was now no mercy shown to the few thousand Romans left defending their capital, not even when they fled for their lives into the sanctity of the temple. They were butchered or burned alive as Camulodunum was annihilated.

The classical accounts correspond with a grim discovery: a burned layer in the ground, from a few centimetres

to half a metre deep. Whether the burning was by the Romans as they fled or by Boudica’s army has never been answered but the burned layer is evident in Colchester and in Boudica’s next targets: London and St Albans.

The relatively new Roman town of Londinium nestled on the banks of the river Thames, around 40 miles south-west of Camulodunum. A centre for trade, it offered rich pickings for Boudica’s army and very little in the way of defence. With the Roman governor of Britain Suetonius Paulinus around 300 miles away in the west and Catus Decianus the administrator in charge of the outrage on Boudica long fled to Gaul, the 30,000 people of the town knew they were on their own. Taking what they could, they abandoned their homes and fled.

Cassius Dio regales the savagery of the Britons’ attack: women with their breasts hacked off and sewn into their mouths, their bodies then skewered full-length on wood-

REX FEATURES

The Britons were expert at guerilla tactics; the Romans were a highly organised killing machine

en poles. The mass executions, religious sacrifices and “indescribable slaughter” echoed Tacitus’s account of the sexual and religious violence meted out to Boudica and her daughters. Now, with London burning at temperatures of almost 1000C (1800F), Boudica could look back and smile at her second success.

Two of the largest towns in Roman Britain now lay in ashes; Boudica’s army had done its job well. But the thirst for revenge had not yet been slaked: to the north-west lay another symbol of the hated foreign rule – not a Roman town but a town of British collaborators who appeared to glory in everything Roman-style. For Boudica’s army, this cultural insult from their enemy Catuvellauni tribe was too much to bear. Slowly gathering their people around them, the tribes began their next journey north-west to their third target: Verulamium, the modern day town of St Albans, in Hertfordshire.

By the summer of AD 60/61, the Catuvellauni knew they were next. The third largest Roman settlement in the province, Verulamium had been designated a *municipium* – a status affording Roman citizenship with all its benefits to its local magistrates. But with no garrisons or Roman officials, they were left to face their fate alone. As Boudica mobilised her rebel army, drunk on their success and weighed down with plunder, the Catuvellauni had no option but to evacuate. While this might have saved the population, it didn’t save the town, which was burned to the ground before the hordes spread out into the surrounding countryside to devastate their old tribal enemy.

According to Tacitus, some 70,000 Roman citizens and allies had now been killed, plus 1,500 of their crack troops ambushed en route to Camulodunum. While the numbers are almost certainly exaggerated, this gave Suetonius Paulinus a problem: to lose thousands of troops and civilians not only looked bad in his despatches back to Nero, it weakened the might of the Romans in Britain and slowed his campaign to conquer and ‘civilise’ this barbarian land. But, worst of all, the Roman humiliation came at the hand of a woman. Not since Cleopatra’s seduction of both Caesar and Mark Antony had the empire suffered such shame.

Few details survive of Paulinus’s march south-east to confront Boudica. We don’t even know the location. Tacitus describes the site in the vaguest terms: the head of a valley with woods to the rear and an open plain in

front where the enemy gathered. According to Cassius Dio, Boudica’s forces numbered 230,000 to the Roman’s 10,000 but the critical difference was in fighting style: while the Britons were expert at guerilla tactics, the Romans were a highly organised killing machine.

Boudica’s stirring speeches in both Tacitus and Dio’s accounts almost certainly owe more to hyperbole than history; however, they *are* of interest in how they portray her against her Roman oppressors. Tacitus describes how Boudica rallied her troops in warrior queen style, arguing she had morality, bravery and the gods on her side. In contrast, Cassius Dio’s prolonged battle speech for her draws upon Roman ideas of Britons as ethereal, almost mythical beings – brave but using ancient and secret arts, goddesses and an auspicious hare to beat their opponents in place of cold, hard steel.

Even the gods could not save the Britons this time: the Roman soldiers held their formations before unleashing a devastating attack. Boudica’s vast army was trapped on the plain with no way forward and any retreat blocked by their own families and possessions. With no space to fight and no way to flee, the Britons were massacred.

And Boudica? Tacitus says she killed herself with poison; Cassius Dio says she fell ill and died. Her daughters disappear from the record, while their tribespeople faced an onslaught little short of genocide. The lands and round-houses of the Trinovantes and Iceni were destroyed. In their place was now a military landscape of forts, as much to assert the iconography of Roman power as any military might.

However, far from losing her own power, Boudica lived on across the empire as a cautionary tale of what happens when you let a woman rule. It’s ironic then, that her legacy

has endured whereas Paulinus’s name has faded. The idea of a British warrior queen battling a foreign enemy was invoked in the 16th century by Queen Elizabeth I to help legitimise her right to rule and to fight against the Spanish empire, and by Queen Victoria in the 19th century in her bid to rule an empire.

For two millennia, Boudica has been reborn as hero and heretic, freedom fighter or dangerous red-haired virago. It’s the paradox of the warrior queen that endures: a woman who has the power to bring forth life but who can also bring death. ■

A coin believed to show Prasutagus. His family’s treatment after his death sparked a massive rebellion





ENGLISH ROSE

In 1554, at the time of her marriage negotiations with Philip of Spain, Mary's portrait was painted by the Dutch artist Antonis Mor. Philip clearly approved, as Mor soon became the Spaniard's favoured portraitist

OPPOSITE PAGE:

The official seal of Mary and Philip



MARY QUEEN AGAINST THE ODDS

'Bloody Mary' Tudor was long-branded a religious bigot and a military failure. Yet, as **ANNA WHITELOCK** explains, the first woman to wear the crown of England was a political pioneer who redefined the monarchy

Bloody Mary was a Catholic bigot, a half-Spanish tyrant who burned nearly 300 Protestant men, women and children in one of the most ferocious periods of persecution in Reformation Europe. At least, that's how subsequent (Protestant) writers painted her. John Foxe's classic martyrology, *Actes and Monuments* (popularly known as the *Book of Martyrs*), first published in 1563, graphically depicted "the horrible and bloody time of Queene Mary" and dominated accounts of Mary's reign for nearly 500 years.

In his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, written on the eve of Mary's death, Scottish Protestant reformer John Knox condemned Mary both as a female ruler and a Catholic: she was a "horrible monster Jezebel" who "compelled [Englishmen] to bow their necks under the yoke of Satan". Traditionally viewed through the prism of her religion, Mary's five-year reign has been described as disastrous, unimaginative and ineffective, devoid of any positive achievements.

Yet Mary was England's first acknowledged queen in her own right (queen regnant), the first woman to wear the crown. It was a situation that her father, Henry VIII, had gone to great and infamous lengths to avert. But Mary more than met the challenge. In unprecedented circumstances, she proved courageous and politically accomplished. Her reign redefined the contours of the English monarchy and proved that queens could rule as kings.

For much of her life, Mary had struggled to defend her right to the throne – and even to preserve her life. After the breakdown of the marriage between her mother, Catherine of Aragon, and Henry VIII, she was demoted from royal princess to bastard. She was, for a time, written out of the succession by her father and, though reinstated by the 1544 Third Act of Succession and by Henry's will, she remained illegitimate. When her brother, the nine-year-old Edward VI inherited the throne in 1547 and

soon confronted Mary's Catholicism, she declared that she would rather "lay her head on a block" than forsake her faith. Her supporters urged her to flee abroad, but Mary remained in England, determined to defend her claim to the crown.

Following her brother's death in July 1553, Mary – against all odds – won the throne in an extraordinary coup d'état. Edward had written Mary out of the succession and instead named the Protestant Lady Jane Grey as heir to the throne. Before the king's death was made public, John Dudley, the Duke of Northumberland, had secured control of the Tower and had the royal artillery and coffers at his disposal. With London apparently secure, Lady Jane was proclaimed queen. When Mary received a tip-off that Edward's death was imminent and Northumberland planned to capture her, she fled across East Anglia. One of her supporters described this as an act of "Herculean rather than of womanly daring". Mary raised her standard at Framlingham Castle in Suffolk, rallying the local gentry and commons to her cause. On 19 July, she was proclaimed queen and her accession was greeted joyously.

The scale of her achievement is often overlooked. Mary had led the only successful revolt against central government in 16th-century England. She had eluded capture, mobilised a counter-coup and, in the moment of crisis, proved courageous, decisive and politically adept. By playing down her Catholicism and proclaiming her legitimacy, Mary secured both Catholic and Protestant support. She also ensured that the crown continued along the legal line of Tudor succession. In doing so, she defended her half-sister Elizabeth's position as her heir (though this wasn't made official until the final weeks of Mary's life).

Having secured the throne, Mary then had to establish herself as a female monarch. It was an unprecedented position in a deeply patriarchal society; indeed, many

The regime was characterised as violently repressive, yet Mary's programme to convert hearts and minds was innovative and energetic

CROWNING GLORY

This manuscript illumination depicts Mary's accession, flanked by angels. Rebels who had sought to deny Mary the throne are shown being defeated in the background.



TIMELINE

The life of Mary Tudor



This portrait of the young Mary by Lucas Horenbout, c.1521-25

At the **age of nine**, Mary is sent to 'preside' over a regional council in the Welsh borders

18 February 1516

Mary is **born to Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon**. She is their first surviving child, but Henry still hopes for a male heir, saying: "By the grace of God, sons will follow"

1525

Henry's marriage to Catherine is annulled. **Elizabeth is born to Anne Boleyn**, and Mary is declared a bastard, no longer Henry's heir

1533

Following the death of her mother, Mary **finally acknowledges** the invalidity of her parents' marriage, her own bastard status and **Henry's position as head of the church**

1536

Mary is **restored to the line of succession** on Henry's death.

Half-brother Edward (right) becomes king and Mary becomes heir to the throne



After Edward's premature death, Mary is **crowned England's first queen regnant** following a bloodless coup d'état that removes Lady Jane Grey, the nine-day 'queen'

1547

Mary defeats the rebellion led by Thomas Wyatt and, in July, **marries Philip of Spain**. England is formally reconciled with Rome

1 October 1553



The first of nearly **300 Protestant martyrs** is burned for heresy

1554

Former archbishop of Canterbury **Thomas Cranmer**, who had helped have Mary's parents' marriage annulled, is burned

February 1555

21 March 1556



Mary and her consort, Philip, painted by Hans Eworth around 1558

This woodcut from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* depicts Cranmer's burning

April 1557

100 English rebels and French soldiers seize Scarborough Castle. **England declares war on France** and in August celebrates victory at St-Quentin

January 1558

England loses Calais, its last territory in France, and Mary experiences a second false pregnancy; her health declines

November 1558

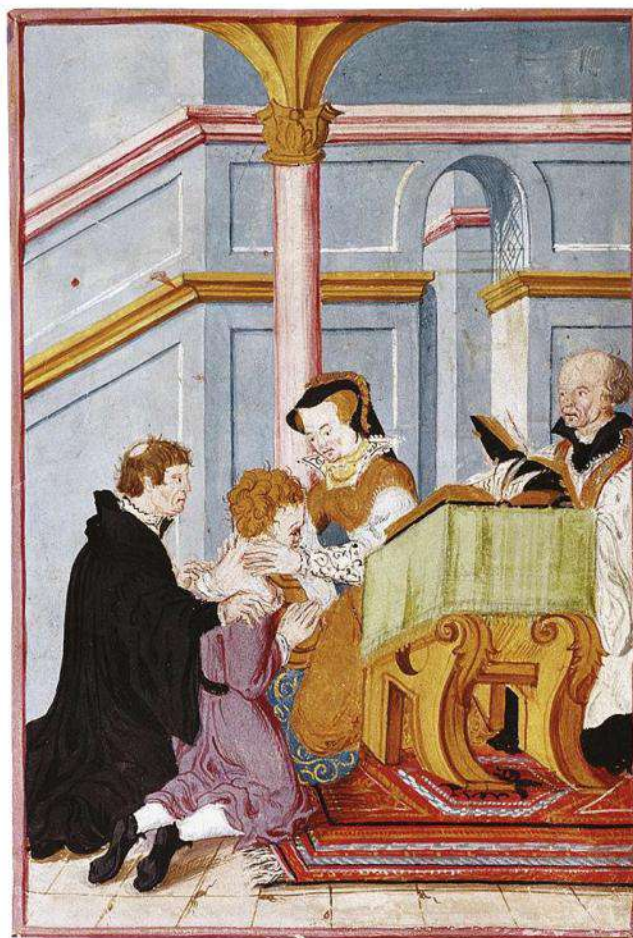
Mary finally acknowledges Elizabeth as her heir. She **dies 11 days later**

questioned whether a woman could actually wear the crown. The monarch was understood to be God's representative on Earth, a figure of defence and justice, and this was a role premised on military might. The language, image and expectations of English monarchy and royal majesty were unequivocally male, and the rights of a female ruler were a matter of great uncertainty.

Mary's accession had changed the rules of the game, and the nature of this new feminised politics was yet to be defined. In many ways, though, Mary proved more than equal to the task. Decisions over the details of the practice and power of a queen regnant became precedents for the future. In April 1554, Mary's parliament passed the Act for Regal Power, enshrining in law that queens held power as "fully, wholly and absolutely" as their male predecessors, thereby establishing the gender-free authority of the crown.

Mary's coronation saw her accepting the full regalia of a male monarch and assuming the sacral role that had hitherto been confined to kings. Previously, it had been precisely the exercise of this semi-priestly power, derived from the coronation, that, it was argued, precluded women from acceding to the throne. By continuing practices undertaken by previous kings – providing the healing touch for the 'king's evil' (scrofula) and blessing rings believed to cure cramp and epilepsy – Mary showed that the office of crowned monarch was not at all limited by gender.

Mary had stated a preference for remaining single, but accepted the need to marry to fulfil her public duty to her faith and her kingdom. Everyone agreed on the need for a husband who could guide her in ruling, as well as provide a male heir, thereby securing the succession. Though it has traditionally been argued that Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain was unpopular, an alliance with Habsburg Spain was politically expedient. Certainly, the marriage treaty was as "favourable as possi-



MIRACLE WORKER? Mary places hands on a sufferer of the 'king's evil,' scrofula – an illness believed to be cured by a monarch's touch

ble for the interest and security and even the grandeur of England", with Mary's legal rights as queen preserved and Spanish influence kept to a minimum.

For some, though, this was not enough. In January 1554, Mary faced a Protestant rebellion led by Thomas Wyatt that aimed to prevent the match, but once again the queen rose to the occasion. Despite the urging of her councillors, she refused to leave London. Then, in a remarkable speech at the Guildhall, she attacked Wyatt as a wicked traitor, defended her religion and choice of husband, and called on Londoners to stand firm in support. Mary stressed her defiance, courage and commitment not by claiming to have the qualities of a

Mary had stated a preference for remaining single, but accepted the need to marry to fulfil her public duty to both her faith and her kingdom



FROM VICTORY TO DEFEAT This contemporary engraving by Franz Hogenberg shows English troops and their Spanish allies besieging St-Quentin in 1557. They captured the town in August but, less than six months later, Calais – England’s last foothold in France – was lost

man but, rather, to have these qualities as a woman. Mary’s rousing rhetoric so mobilised the people of London that, when Thomas Wyatt approached the Tower, he found Ludgate barred against him. The rebels were compelled to lay down their arms and sue for mercy. Mary was manifestly an effective public speaker well before her sister Elizabeth garnered the plaudits.

Mary’s reputation has been almost entirely defined by religion and summed up by the infamous epithet ‘Bloody Mary’. Elizabethan Protestants, the first to write the history of Mary’s reign, characterised the regime as violently repressive, spiritually moribund and resoundingly unsuccessful. Yet, in many ways, Mary’s program to convert hearts and minds to Roman Catholicism was innovative and energetic. Led by Cardinal Reginald Pole, the recatholicisation programme encouraged preaching and used the printing press to produce homilies and catechisms, and to foster a parochial revival of Catholicism.

Even the burnings – the accepted punishment for

heresy at the time – were, it has been argued, broadly effective. Laymen were fully and enthusiastically involved in the work of detecting heretics and, by 1558, the numbers being burned were falling. The Marian church was proving successful in its mission – but then Mary died prematurely, after just five years of rule and with no Catholic heir.

Traditional assessments of Mary’s queenship have focused heavily on the apparent military failures of her reign, epitomised by the loss of the port of Calais in the Anglo-French war of 1557–59. Such a failure contrasts with Elizabeth’s victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588. While Elizabeth is popularly remembered as a triumphant warrior queen, Mary is pilloried as achieving only military humiliation.

Certainly, the loss of England’s last foothold in France

Mary redefined royal ritual and law,
thereby establishing that a female ruler would enjoy
identical power and authority to male monarchs

has cast a long shadow over Mary's reputation. Yet assessments of Mary's military prowess should be rethought. Before the loss of Calais, she experienced successes. In August 1557, English and Spanish forces captured St-Quentin, an action in which some 3,000 French troops were killed and 7,000 captured, including their commander Anne de Montmorency, the constable of France.

The news was greeted in England with widespread celebrations. London chroniclers heralded the success of "the king, our master" – Mary's husband was now accepted. The political community was motivated for the national war effort in King Philip's service. But, weeks later, the English experienced the humiliating defeat that would stamp a decisive imprint on Mary's reign. As the last remnant of the English claim to France, Calais had a symbolic value that was out of proportion to its economic and military importance.

Despite the brevity of her reign, Mary extended royal authority in the localities, managed her parliament, rebuilt the navy, reorganised the militia and laid the foundations for reform of the coinage and the restructuring of the economy. New markets for exports were developed in Guinea, the Baltic and Russia, with the latter resulting in the formation of the Muscovy Company in 1555. The government's overhaul of the book of rates in the same year also increased the crown's revenues from customs. Statutes were passed that regulated the proper manufacture of particular wares and provided for more efficient and systematic production measures. Five hospitals were re-endowed by Mary, including the Savoy Hospital in London.

Mary proved to be a conscientious and hardworking queen who was determined to be closely involved in government business and policymaking. She would, as the Venetian ambassador recorded, rise "at daybreak when, after saying her prayers and hearing mass in private", she would "transact business incessantly until after midnight".

Mary ruled with the full measure of royal majesty and achieved much of what she set out to do. She won her rightful throne, married

her Spanish prince and returned the country to Roman Catholicism. The marriage was a match with the most powerful ruling house in Europe, and the highly favourable marriage treaty ultimately won the support of the English government. She had defeated rebels and preserved the Tudor monarchy. Her Catholicism was influenced by her humanist education and showed many signs of broad acceptance before she died. She was an intelligent, politically adept and resolute monarch – very much her own woman.

Once seen as weak-willed and lacking in leadership qualities, Mary is now heralded as courageous and warlike, educated for rule and politically determined. Her early death – in the midst of disastrous harvest failures and a flu epidemic, and soon after the loss of Calais – ensured Mary's reputation was fatally sealed. If she had lived longer, her initiatives in religion and finance would have come to fruition; if she had borne a child, a Catholic future for England would have been assured.

Nevertheless, by securing the throne, Mary ensured that the crown continued along the legal line of Tudor succession. As the first queen regnant of England, she redefined royal ritual and law, thereby establishing that a female ruler, married or unmarried, would enjoy identical power and authority to male monarchs. Mary was the Tudor trailblazer, a political pioneer whose reign redefined the English monarchy.

Her successor had the advantage of being the second woman to rule. Though she would never acknowledge it, Elizabeth built on the foundations laid by her sister, and received from her an invaluable political education.

After Mary's death, the coronation robes of England's first queen were hastily refurbished – with a new bodice and sleeves – to fit its second. This outfit was just one of many things Elizabeth borrowed from her predecessor. ■

SISTER ACT

Elizabeth succeeded her half-sister and prospered from Mary's huge constitutional advances





Elizabeth I

THE MONARCH BEHIND THE MASK

ANNA WHITELOCK looks beyond Elizabeth I's carefully crafted image as an all-conquering Tudor beauty and finds a balding, frail woman, scarred by pox, crippled by headaches and plagued by bouts of depression

CHANGING FACES

The famous c1588 portrait of Gloriana in the wake of the defeat of the Spanish Armada – when she was at the height of her powers and beauty

OPPOSITE PAGE:

A commemorative coin issued in 1562 to mark Elizabeth's recovery from smallpox



In 1586, Queen Elizabeth I declared: “We princes, I tell you, are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world duly observed; the eyes of many behold our actions, a spot is soon spied in our garments; a blemish noted quickly in our doings.”

Elizabeth’s “doings” – the state of her health, her actions and behaviour – were the subject of international speculation. Her private life was of public concern. Her body was held to be one and the same as England. The stability of the state depended on the queen’s wellbeing, chastity and fertility.

An elderly, unmarried queen with no heir raised fears. Over the course of her reign, the physical reality of Elizabeth’s weak, female and ageing ‘natural body’ had to be reconciled with the unerring and immortal ‘body politic’. As we’ll see over the following pages, the ‘real’ Elizabeth grew ever more estranged from her public image.

The young, nubile Elizabeth aged into an old woman with wrinkles and black, foul-smelling teeth

A portrait of the age-ravaged monarch in c1595



1 Hiding the ugly truth

Elizabeth’s ladies spent hours preparing the ageing queen’s pockmarked face for the public

Elizabeth I, the all-glorious queen of magnificence and spectacular display, was celebrated for her ageless glamour, her white flawless skin and sumptuous clothing. Her contemporaries firmly believed that beauty amplified female power, so they regarded the queen’s splendour as confirmation of her claim to the throne. Yet over the five decades of her rule, the young and nubile Elizabeth, with her pretty face, red hair and slender physique, aged into an old woman with wrinkles, a reddish-coloured wig to cover her balding hair, and black, rotten and foul-smelling teeth.

The marks left by smallpox, together with the lines and wrinkles around her eyes and mouth, were skilfully hidden with layers of caustic cosmetics – pungent white lead and vinegar. It was the job of Elizabeth’s trusted ladies to administer to her withering face and ensure she was ready to face her public. Yet the use of lead over time ate into her skin, making it grey and wrinkled, and so she would have to wear the lead base

even more thickly. As Elizabeth aged, more vivid colours were applied to her cheeks and lips.

The wigless, derobed, unmade-up queen should never have been seen by any except her trusted ladies. Yet in September 1599, Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, broke all the rules and stormed into the queen’s bedchamber “where he found the queen newly up, the hair about her face”. Elizabeth had just a simple robe over her nightdress, her wrinkled skin was free of cosmetics and, without her wig, Essex saw her bald head with just wisps of thinning grey hair “hanging about her ears”. This was the unadorned reality of the queen’s body, and the earl would pay the ultimate price for his tendency for such impulsive behaviour; he was executed for treason in 1601.

The mask of youth that Elizabeth’s ladies had to daily create was also represented in portraits, which had to be officially sanctioned. Any portraits that revealed a true likeness were to be destroyed.

2 Was she really a virgin?

Elizabeth's carefully crafted image of chastity couldn't drown out the gossip about her sex life

From her youth, Elizabeth was championed as an embodiment of chaste maidenhood and so was a highly desirable marriage prospect. As she aged and moved beyond her childbearing years, while remaining unmarried and childless, Elizabeth was styled ever more spectacularly as the Virgin Queen. She had sacrificed herself to the realm, and her body, fused with that of the state, remained impregnable. In countless images she is adorned with pearls symbolising chastity; she is represented as the vestal virgin Tuccia in portraits, and the Virgin Mary in pageants, images and other entertainments.

Yet, from the earliest months of her reign onwards, there was much talk that the queen's behaviour challenged this image of chastity. Foreign ambassadors' reports are full of intimate details, such as Elizabeth's supposed sexual liaisons with the Duke of Alençon and Christopher Hatton, the lord chancellor.

Yet it was Elizabeth's relationship with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, that got most tongues wagging. No sooner had she ascended the throne than courtiers were exchanging scandalous gossip about the queen and the earl's night-time liaisons.

Women at the time were thought to possess more voracious sexual appetites than men and so contemporaries found it hard to believe that any woman past

puberty could remain chaste of her own free will, especially if she lacked a husband to provide an outlet for her sexual energies. The king of France would jest that one of the great questions of Europe was "whether Queen Elizabeth was a maid or no". The courts of Europe were abuzz with gossip about her behaviour.

By refusing to allow the queen's corpse to be opened and embalmed on her death, the ladies of the bedchamber were likely acting to prevent a postmortem examination that may have raised further questions about her virginity. In so doing, they may have been performing a final act of loyalty to their Virgin Queen by allowing her to remain *regina intacta*.



Elizabeth's lovers?
Christopher Hatton (top)
and the Duke of
Alençon (above)



Robert Dudley,
Earl of Leicester,
in the c1560s.
Rumours of his
night-time
liaisons with
the queen
fuelled gossip
right across
Europe

Foreign ambassadors' reports are full of intimate details of Elizabeth's supposed sexual liaisons

3 Fainting fits and toothache

The Tudor superwoman was prone to bouts of ill health

Any sign of weakness in the queen's body threatened the stability of the realm itself. Elizabeth and her councillors were always at pains to stress her health and vigour. She would dance with ambassadors, go on annual summer tours, lead the

chase when hunting and spurn the need for medicine. Yet, while Elizabeth lived to be an old woman, she often experienced ill health.

From the moment of her accession to the throne, there was talk that the queen had a weak constitution;

ambassadors reported rumours that she was "not likely to have a long life". Since puberty she had regularly suffered from poor health, ranging from indigestion and occasional fainting fits, frequent and intense headaches, to insomnia and eyestrain.

How age took its toll on the Virgin Queen

Memory loss

In her twilight years, Elizabeth often had to be reminded what jobs she had bestowed upon her courtiers

Headaches

Along with fainting fits and indigestion, intense headaches plagued the queen from puberty

Smallpox scars

Layers of caustic make-up were applied to the queen's face to mask the scars left by this often-fatal disease

Rotten teeth

One ambassador reported that so many of the queen's teeth had fallen out, "no one can understand her when she speaks quickly"

Baldness

Elizabeth wore a reddish-coloured wig to hide her balding head

Short-sightedness

The queen's visual impairment would have made great occasions of state a real challenge

Throat ulcer

The queen was afflicted by a painful swelling in her throat during the final weeks of her life

Rheumatism in arm

A surgeon's suggestion that Elizabeth apply ointment to her "rheumatic" arm got an icy reception

Fertility

The queen's ability to bear children and her irregular menstruation was the subject of gossip in courts across Europe

Leg ulcer

Members of the French court were quick to ridicule Elizabeth when she was made lame by an ulcer

4 A fragile mind

Behind the tough rhetoric lay a troubled woman prone to insomnia – and who was scared of the dark

Elizabeth was extremely short-sighted, which must have made even the simplest daily tasks a real challenge. Thanks to her love of sweet things, she often suffered from toothache. She also suffered with a leg ulcer which, for a time, made her lame and a target of French mockery.

When a “cunning bonesetter” (a surgeon) told Elizabeth that an ache in her arm was caused by a “cold, rheumatic humour” (rheumatism) and might be treated by applying ointments, Elizabeth was indignant. One source describes how she banished the surgeon from her presence and was “most impatient to hear of any decay in herself, and thereupon will admit no help of physic or surgery”.

Elizabeth also suffered from irregular menstruation, prompting her surgeons to regularly open a vein in her ankle or her arm from which to draw blood and so bring her ‘humours’ back into line. Rumours circulated that this was proof that she was incapable of having children and would therefore never marry.

Stories that Elizabeth was physically incapable of having sex had been commonplace for years. The playwright Ben Jonson later claimed that the queen had “a membrane on her which made her incapable of man, though for delight she tried many”.

Yet the security of the Protestant state rested upon Elizabeth’s ability to produce heirs. William Cecil, the queen’s principal secretary, would stress the “aptness” of the queen’s body to bear children and insisted that she remained healthy and fertile.

From the moment of her accession to the throne, there was talk that the queen had a weak constitution

In August 1588, as the Spanish Armada threatened the shores of England, Elizabeth made her famous speech in front of her forces at Tilbury Docks in London. In a rousing display of courage, Elizabeth assured her troops of her commitment and valour, climaxing with the famous words: “I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king.”

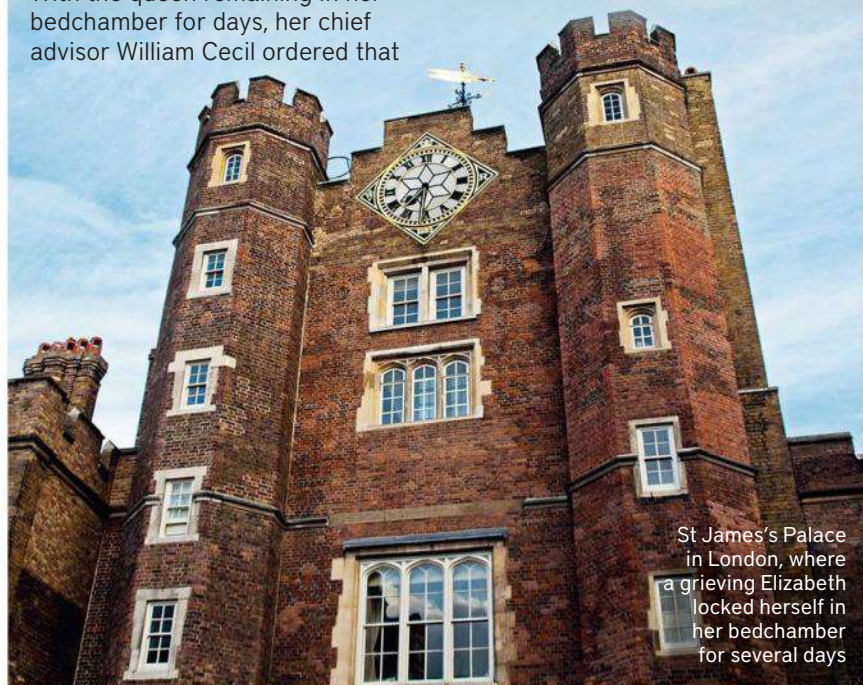
Victory swiftly followed, with Elizabeth celebrated as an English heroine who stood firm to protect her nation. She was lauded in ballads, in commemorative medals, prints and portraits.

Yet while the country celebrated victory, the queen confined herself to her bedchamber at St James’s Palace in London, locking the door and ordering her ladies away so that she might grieve alone. Just weeks after the Armada victory, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, had died. Elizabeth had lost her greatest love, the man whom she had grown up with and adored. With the queen remaining in her bedchamber for days, her chief advisor William Cecil ordered that

the doors of the chamber be broken down.

Elizabeth was also scared of the dark, relying on the companionship of her trusted women at night to comfort her. When, in 1576, Dorothy Stafford, the queen’s regular bedfellow, broke a leg in a riding accident, Mary Scudamore, another trusted intimate, was hastily recalled to court. As the Earl of Sussex wrote to her: “Her majesty shall not in the night have for the most part so good rest as shall take after your coming.” Following the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, whose death warrant she had signed, Elizabeth suffered from sleepless nights and vivid nightmares.

In addition, Elizabeth was prone to bouts of depression that drove her to seek sanctuary, away from the public glare of the court. When Sir John Harington, her godson, visited her, he was shocked by her introversion. “She walketh out but little, meditates much alone and sometimes writes in private to her best friends.”



St James's Palace in London, where a grieving Elizabeth locked herself in her bedchamber for several days



This c1610 painting shows an elderly Elizabeth. The queen refused to go to her deathbed for days out of fear that "if she once lay down, she should never rise"

5 Going down with a fight

The dying queen used “gems and pearls” to divert attention from her decaying body – and refused to accept her impending fate

In late October 1601, Elizabeth opened what was to be her final parliament. The queen was now in her late sixties, yet rose spectacularly to the occasion and gave a rousing speech praising her people for their love and loyalty to her and reaffirming her commitment to them.

However, at the opening ceremony, Elizabeth’s frailty was evident: her ceremonial robes of velvet and ermine had proved too heavy for her and, on the steps of the throne, she had become unsteady on her feet and would have fallen, noted Lord Henry Howard, “if some gentlemen had not suddenly cast themselves under that side that tottered and supported her”.

Elizabeth now struggled to maintain the dignity of her royal office. There were signs that her memory was fading; this, together with her failing eyesight, meant that she found it increasingly difficult to concentrate on state business. Letters now had to be read aloud to her and, when some courtiers arrived to pay their respects, she had to be reminded of the offices that she herself had bestowed upon them.

Yet still the queen would rally when she needed to. Shortly after arriving at Richmond in early 1603, despite reports that she had begun to “grow sickly”, she entertained the Venetian ambassador, Giovanni Carlo Scaramelli. After many hours of preparation, Elizabeth appeared resplendent and “with the confidence of a younger woman”. She was adorned with a “vast quantity of gems and pearls upon her person”. It was an ostentatious and, to some, absurd sight. As she aged, she imagined, observed Tudor statesman Sir Francis Bacon, “that the people, who are more influenced, by externals, would be diverted by

the glitter of her jewels, from noticing the decay of her personal attractions”.

Yet the signs of the queen’s decrepitude were hard to ignore. Another ambassador described how such was the decay in the queen’s teeth that many had fallen out so that “no one can understand her easily when she speaks quickly”.

Elizabeth soon fell into a deep melancholy and became increasingly unwell with a swelling in her throat. By March, as the ulcer in her throat burst, her condition deteriorated. She had stopped eating and bathing, and refused to be undressed or put to bed. As one courtier reported, she “had a persuasion that if she once lay down, she should never rise” and so the queen “could not be gotten to her bed in a whole week”.

Determined not to go to her deathbed, Elizabeth “sat up for whole days, supported by pillows mostly awake and speaking not at all”. The once-iconic beauty now spent her final days lying on cushions on the floor. Finally, as she weakened further, she was carried to bed where, in the early hours of a March morning, she died, six months before her 70th birthday. ■

The once-iconic beauty spent her final days lying on cushions on the floor

Elizabeth’s marble tomb at Westminster Abbey. Her funeral procession was an emotional occasion, provoking “such a general sighing, groaning and weeping as the like hath not been seen or known in the memory of man”





ANNE DAUGHTER *and* HEIR

Although hers would be the final reign of the Stuart dynasty, Queen Anne was, as **TRACY BORMAN** argues, a much more popular monarch than her predecessor William III

The fact that Queen Anne was the last monarch of the Stuart dynasty was due to an extraordinary, tragic, quirk of fate. By the time of her accession, she had been pregnant 17 times, but only five children were born alive, all of whom died in infancy. Her son William lived the longest, dying in 1700 aged 11. The same reproductive misfortune had befallen Anne's sister, Mary, who had also failed to produce an heir. If she had, then Anne would not have come to the throne upon William III's death on 8 March 1702.

The two women were daughters of James II (James VII in Scotland) by his first wife, Anne Hyde. The future Queen Anne's birth had taken place on 6 February 1665 during the reign of her uncle, Charles II. At the time, there seemed little prospect of Anne inheriting the throne. Charles II had fathered numerous illegitimate children and there was little reason to suppose that his marriage to Catherine of Braganza would not result in a legitimate heir. But his queen remained barren and, upon his death in 1685, he was obliged to leave the throne to his brother, Anne's father, James. Anne was now second in line to the throne, but James had remarried after his first wife's death

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REGAL STATURE

Edmund Lilly's 1703 portrait of Queen Anne. Following the 1707 Act of Union, she became queen of Great Britain and Ireland

OPPOSITE PAGE:

Princess Anne in her youth. As was tradition in the royal family, the young Anne was raised in a separate residence from her father, the future James II. Very significantly, he was pro-Catholic, but she was brought up as a Protestant

and his second marriage, to Mary of Modena, was proving a fertile one. Ironically, when she gave birth to a son in 1688, it ought to have removed any prospect of Mary and Anne inheriting the throne. In fact, the birth brought them to it. By then, James II had so alienated his people that the prospect of an heir continuing his absolutist policies was too much to bear. James was duly ousted from power and replaced by his Protestant daughter, Mary, and her husband, William of Orange.

James never gave up the idea of reclaiming the throne for himself or his son, and the 'Jacobite' (from the Latin for 'James') movement would remain a thorn in Mary and Anne's sides throughout their reigns. Nevertheless, Anne's accession in 1702 was a peaceful one – even if it had only been decided upon the year before. The death of her longest-surviving child in 1700 had thrown the succession into question. William III had adored the boy and had intended him as his heir. Anne was the next natural choice, but her gender – and the fact that William disliked her – made it possible that the throne would revert to the male Stuart line in the form of James II's son. But he was as rigidly Catholic as his father had been and this proved the deciding factor. In 1701, parliament passed the Act of Settlement, reaffirming the principle that a Roman Catholic should never be monarch.

Anne was 37 at the time of her accession. Her numerous pregnancies had taken their toll on her figure, contributing to the gout that plagued her from her mid-thirties and which left her barely able to walk.

But Anne made up for her physical deficiencies with the power of her personality. She had inherited the charm of her late uncle, Charles II, and had the popular touch that William III had so markedly lacked. When she gave her first speech to parliament, she won widespread acclaim for declaring: "I know my heart to be entirely English." It was exactly what her xenophobic people wanted to hear after being ruled by a widowed Dutchman for eight years.



SOURD FRIENDSHIP This Victorian-era illustration shows the influential Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, scolding Queen Anne. The pair fell out in dramatic fashion

Anne also combined the perfect blend of a high regard for the ancient ceremonies and pageantry of the crown with a firm commitment to a modernised monarchy. During her reign, the notion of a constitutional monarchy, in which the sovereign reigned and the ministers ruled, was consolidated, thereby laying the foundations for the modern state of Britain.

Although she presented a welcome change to her predecessor, Anne upheld most of William's policies – including his aggression towards France. Just two months after her accession, the Grand Alliance of Britain, the Netherlands, the Holy Roman Empire and the German princes declared war on Louis XIV in the War of the Spanish Succession. Anne's choice of commander was inspired. John Churchill had been dismissed from court by William III, but appointed captain of the forces later in his reign. Anne retained him for his qualities as a military leader, but also because his wife Sarah was her best friend.

Anne combined the perfect blend of a high regard for the ancient ceremonies of the crown with a firm commitment to a modernised monarchy

Losing her mother at the age of six and being separated from her Catholic father had made Anne reserved and lonely. She had subsequently forged a number of close friendships with women, and by far the most significant and enduring was that with Sarah.

As soon as she was queen, Anne wasted no time in appointing Sarah to the vaulted position of Groom of the Stole and head of the royal bedchamber. John, meanwhile, was given a plethora of military commands, as well as being made ambassador extraordinary to the Dutch Republic. He excelled in the latter post, freeing the Dutch from French domination, and winning himself the dukedom of Marlborough.

Despite her poor health, Anne was assiduous in all of her duties as queen. She wrote letters to her fellow heads of state by hand, which must have been a challenge given that as well as gout in her hands, she had poor eyesight. One of the greatest achievements of her reign was the Act of Union, which came into effect on 1 May 1707. This united England and Scotland into a single state and parliament. It had been hard won: relations between the two kingdoms had been increasingly hostile, not least because of Scotland's support of the Jacobite cause.

In 1703, the Scottish parliament had passed the Act of Security, which decreed that the next monarch of Scotland need not be the same person as the successor to the English throne. England's parliament retaliated with the Alien Act, which banned all of the major Scottish export trades south of the border. It followed this up with a proposal "that the two kingdoms of England and Scotland be for ever United into one kingdom by the name of Great Britain". Threatened by the loss of their lucrative trade, the pressure of economics was too strong; the Scots relented and the historic union was forged.

The following year was a turbulent one for Anne. The overweening influence of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough had caused widespread resentment across the court and country. Over time, the queen herself was tiring of the duchess's domineering and high-handed manner. On 19 August 1708, the simmering hostility suddenly erupted when the two women shared a coach to St Paul's Cathedral for a service of thanksgiving for Marlborough's victory at Oudenarde in Belgium, a key battle in the War of the Spanish Succession.

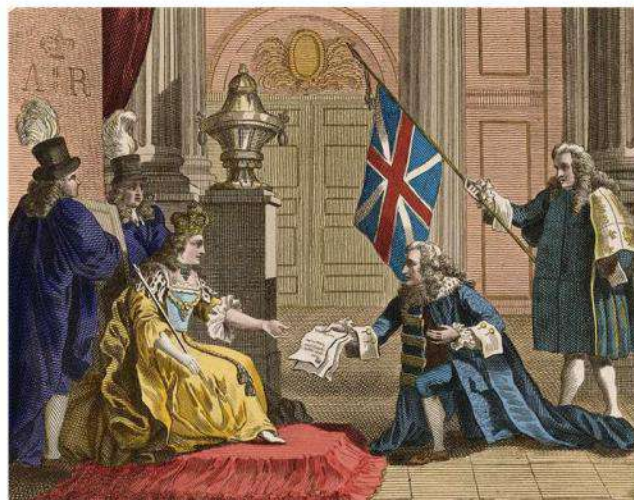
Earlier, Anne had refused to wear the cumbersome jewels that Sarah had laid out for her and, as she stepped

out of the coach, Sarah was heard to hiss "Be quiet" to her royal mistress. She had gone too far. Anne never forgave this insult to her majesty and decided to end the friendship immediately.

Two months later, Queen Anne's adored husband, Prince George of Denmark, died. In every other respect than producing heirs, theirs had been a successful marriage, marked by mutual love and affection. In her loneliness, Anne forged a close friendship with another female courtier, Abigail Masham. Modest and undemanding, she formed a welcome contrast to Sarah Churchill, who flew into a jealous rage and accused the queen of conducting a lesbian affair with her new friend and confidante.

Tired of the crippling expense and loss of life that the protracted war with France had exacted – and no longer cajoled into supporting her chief commander – Anne dismissed Marlborough in December 1711 and made peace with France. A treaty was formally agreed in 1713 and England emerged triumphant. Despite the heavy losses that she had suffered, she was now more powerful militarily than France and more commercially effective than the Netherlands.

Anne did not get long to savour her victory. She died on 1 August 1714 after suffering two violent strokes. She was just 49. Her ministers secretly offered the crown to James II's son on condition that he renounce his Catholicism and convert to the Protestant faith. He refused and the crown passed peacefully to George Louis, Elector of Hanover, as decreed in the 1701 Act of Settlement and confirmed by the Act of Union six years later. The turbulent century of Stuart rule was at an end. ■



THE BIRTH OF BRITAIN The Act of Union is presented to Queen Anne in 1707. The legislation bound England and Scotland together



REGAL GLOW

Thomas Sully's painting of Queen Victoria in 1838, the year after she ascended the throne

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Thomas Woolnoth's engraving
of Princess Victoria, when
she was nine years old



How *do you solve* a problem *like* Victoria ?

KATE WILLIAMS, the author of *Becoming Queen*, charts the challenges that Victoria had to overcome to gain the throne – most of which came from her own mother

“A woman on the throne of England – how ridiculous!”

These words were uttered by Prince George of Cambridge, after he'd been pushed far from the succession by his plump little cousin, Princess Victoria. And many at the time agreed with his assessment. Even worse, as the queen herself put it: “I was the first person ever to bear the name Victoria.” Astonishingly to us for whom the word ‘Victorian’ seems so categorically English, it was at the time regarded as an absurd, invented name. Still worse, it had a French origin; France had been, until only a few years before, the country's great enemy.

The little princess was further hampered by other matters: an unprepossessing appearance, shyness, a wilful temper and, most of all, a greedy mother who wished to use her daughter as a tool to power. But Victoria was also spirited, vibrant and determined – and, from a young age, determined to be queen.

“A pretty little princess, as plump as a partridge,” declared the Duke of Kent on 24 May 1819, the day of his daughter's birth. The arrival of Princess Victoria thrilled her father, but made little noise in the country. Kent was only fourth in line to the throne, after his brothers the Prince Regent, the Duke of York and the Duke of Clarence. To the rest of the royal family, Victoria was merely the daughter of a minor brother, nothing more than a pawn to be eventually traded in marriage.

Victoria was born in the midst of a succession crisis. By 1817, with George III's five surviving daughters and seven sons nudging middle age, they had managed just one legitimate heir, Princess Charlotte, the daughter of the Prince Regent (the siblings' illegitimate children would finally total 56). The British looked to Princess Charlotte as the hope for their country, in contrast to her debauched, spendthrift uncles and spinster aunts. When she became pregnant by her popular husband, Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, the people were delighted. But after 50 hours of labour, she produced a stillborn baby boy.

Within hours, she had fallen into a fatal fever and died. The country was grief-stricken and the politicians began panicking over the lack of an heir.

In the hope that parliament would pay off their huge debts, the dukes embarked on a race to marry and produce children. The Duke of Kent sent away his mistress of 20 years and set about courting Prince Leopold's sister, Victoire, Dowager Princess of Leiningen. Victoire was initially reluctant to relinquish her “agreeable independent position”, as she put it, to marry Kent, an indebted duke 20 years her senior, but Leopold pressed her into agreeing. Despite her doubts and his debts, the two were happy and Victoire soon fell pregnant. “My brothers are not so strong as I am,” the elated duke postured. “I have led a regular life, I shall outlive them all; the crown will come to me and my children.”

The Prince Regent was infuriated by his brother's success in producing a child and took his revenge by wrecking the christening. He allowed only a handful of guests and refused to let the child bear the names associated with queens such as Charlotte or Augusta, or indeed the feminised version of his own name, ‘Georgiana’. Instead, on the actual day, the archbishop of Canterbury stood with the child over the font, waiting for the Prince Regent to inform him of her name. Finally, the Regent spat: “Give her the mother's name.” Her first name was Alexandrina, after the tsar (even the Regent dared not anger the Russian ruler by refusing it), but she quickly became known by her middle name – Victoria.

By December 1819, Kent had accepted his debts were insurmountable and moved his family to a cheaper house in Sidmouth on the coast of Devon. It was a bitter winter and, in early January, after returning from one of his outdoor walks soaked to the bone, the duke took to his bed with a chill. Within days, he was severely ill and died on 23 January, holding his wife's hand. “She kills all her hus-

The politicians voiced their opinion
that Victoria was just too ridiculous
a name for a British monarch

TIMELINE

Victoria: a young life

A princess is born to the Duke and Duchess of Kent at Kensington Palace. She is, the duke admits, "more of a pocket Hercules than a pocket Venus"

24 May 1819

The Duke of Kent dies, after a chill develops into pneumonia

23 January 1820

29 January 1820

King George III dies and the Prince Regent becomes King George IV. Victoria is now third in line to the throne. On the same day, she and her mother arrive to live in Kensington Palace



The infant Victoria pictured with her domineering mother

Death of George IV. His brother becomes King William IV and 11-year-old Victoria becomes heir to the throne

26 June 1830

Victoria's tour around Britain is a three-month trip that takes in Wales, Cheshire, the Midlands and Oxford

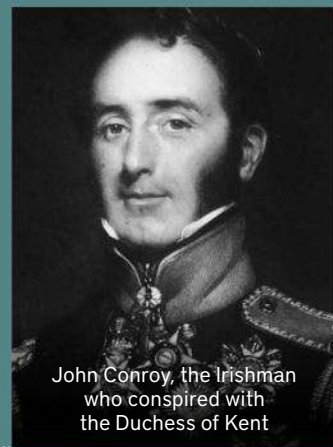
1 August 1832



A profile of Princess Victoria, aged 18, before her accession to the throne

Victoria falls ill with typhoid.

She resists her mother's attempt to force her to appoint John Conroy as her secretary and advisor



John Conroy, the Irishman who conspired with the Duchess of Kent

Oct / Nov 1835

Victoria turns 18. The whole country celebrates – except the duchess and John Conroy

24 May 1837

Death of William IV. Victoria ascends the throne. Her first act is to ask for an hour alone

20 June 1837

28 June 1838

Queen Victoria's imperial state crown

Victoria is crowned queen. "I shall ever remember this day as the proudest of my life," she declares





COUNTRY GIRL
A portrait of Victoria, aged nine. Just two years later, following the death of King George IV, she became heir to the throne

BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

The young Victoria wasn't allowed to be left alone.
Every word, every cough was faithfully reported

bands,” sniped the wife of the Russian ambassador. Victoria was just eight months old.

The 33-year-old duchess was impoverished and desperate. Her brother Leopold persuaded the begrudging Prince Regent to allow her rooms in Kensington Palace in London and she took with her John Conroy, a handsome Irishman who had been a personal attendant to the duke. In the chaos after the duke’s death, Conroy had manoeuvred himself into the duchess’s absolute confidence and became the *de facto* ruler of her household.

On 29 January 1820, the day that the duchess arrived at the palace, the poor mad King George finally died and the Prince Regent finally became King George IV. After the Dukes of York and Clarence, baby Victoria was next in line to the throne.

Kensington Palace was then cold, gloomy and shabby – and the life Victoria led there was little better. The duchess and John Conroy were absolutely united in a quest to make Victoria their slave. Both were convinced that Victoria would become queen and their dearest hope was that she would ascend to the throne as a minor, so the duchess could gather power and riches for herself and her dear friend. If, however, she succeeded after the age of 18, they wished to ensure that she would give up all power to them. And so they instigated the ‘Kensington System.’

The Kensington System was a cruel regime of bullying and, most of all, surveillance. Victoria was not allowed to be alone for a second. She slept in her mother’s room every night, with a nurse or governess standing guard over her until her mother retired to bed. Her every cough, every word and even choice of dress was faithfully reported to John Conroy. She was kept away from her father’s family and isolated from all children, apart from Conroy’s.

The duchess was also terrified of reports that the Duke of Cumberland, who was the next brother in line to the throne after Victoria, wished to kill the little girl. Certainly, Cumberland spread rumours that Victoria was too sickly to rule and tried to find ways of pushing her out of the succession – and it is not impossible that he might have wanted her dead. Whatever his intentions, Victoria’s food was tasted before every meal and she wasn’t permitted to walk downstairs without holding somebody’s hand.

Victoria felt her confined situation keenly. “I led a very unhappy childhood,” she lamented. She declared that her only “happy time” had been driving out with her half-sister Feodora and her governess, for “then I could speak or look as I liked”.

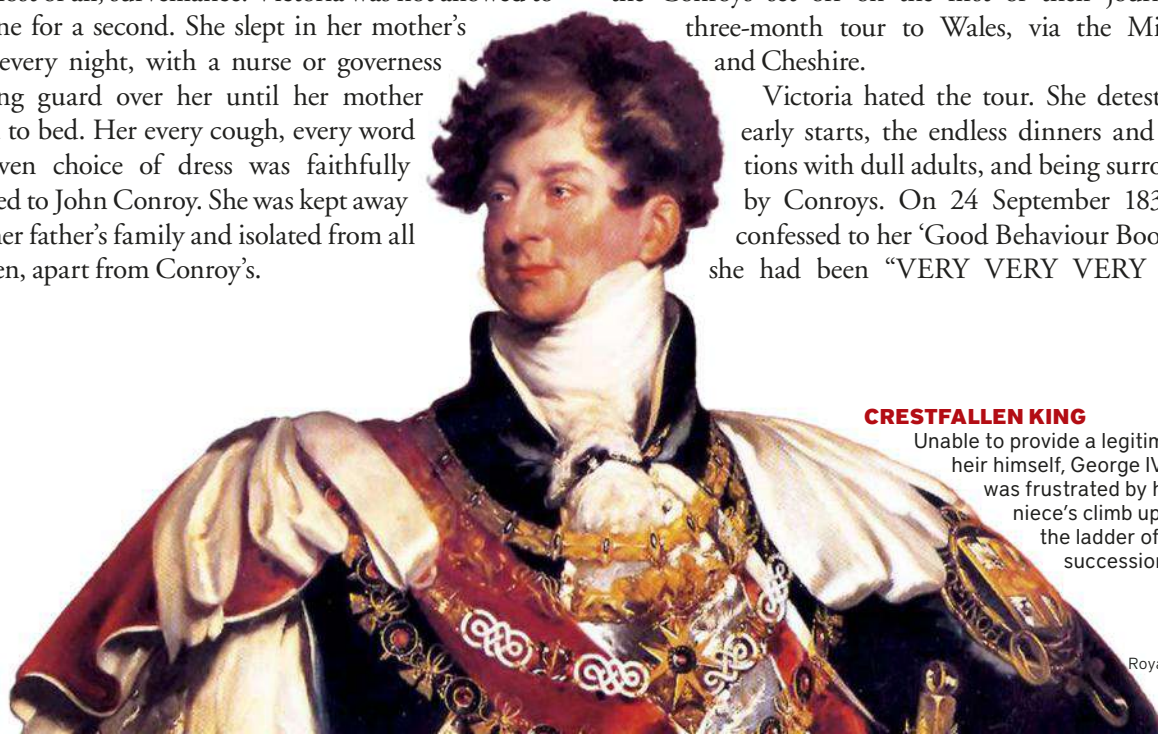
As Victoria grew up, the duchess redoubled her attempts to control her and to show herself off as the power behind the throne. Time proved her right: Kent’s elder brothers did remain childless. The Duke of Clarence and his much younger wife had a girl, Charlotte, in 1819, but she lived only a few hours. In late December 1820, they had – to the despair of the Duchess of Kent – another girl, Elizabeth. But by the following March, she too had died. To the duchess’s delight, there were no more children.

In 1830, just after Victoria turned 11, George IV died and the 64-year-old Duke of Clarence ascended the throne as William IV (the previous heir, the Duke of York, had died three years before). Victoria was now heir and her mother decided to parade her to the country as the future queen – with herself and John Conroy by the princess’s side. On 1 August 1832, she, the 13-year-old Victoria, and the Conroys set off on the first of their journeys: a three-month tour to Wales, via the Midlands and Cheshire.

Victoria hated the tour. She detested the early starts, the endless dinners and receptions with dull adults, and being surrounded by Conroys. On 24 September 1832, she confessed to her ‘Good Behaviour Book’ that she had been “VERY VERY VERY VERY

CRESTFALLEN KING

Unable to provide a legitimate heir himself, George IV was frustrated by his niece’s climb up the ladder of succession



HORRIBLY NAUGHTY!!!!”, underlining each word four times. Yet despite her complaints and the king’s fury at the duchess’s presumption, the tours continued across England: to the south coast and the Isle of Wight, and the Midlands and the north, as well as including sporadic visits to seaside resorts and aristocratic houses throughout the year.

Meanwhile, the politicians voiced their opinion that Victoria was just too ridiculous a name for a ruler. Indeed, the king tried to force the duchess to agree to change it to Elizabeth or Charlotte. Initially, she agreed. Finally, however, she refused, wishing that her daughter would bear her name. It is odd to think now that if she had relented, the Victorian age would never have existed.

For all the grand schemes concocted by the duchess and Conroy for exerting absolute control over Victoria on her succession, time wasn’t on their side. Soon the princess was 16 and, with King William showing signs of holding onto health for another two years, the pair began to panic – and decided to embark on a new strategy. They told all those with influence that Victoria was so immature that she would require the duchess to rule for her until at least the age of 21. At the same time, they plotted to force Victoria to give them positions of power when she ascended the throne.

In the autumn of 1835, when Victoria fell ill with typhoid, they saw an opportunity to act. While the princess was weeping with fever in bed, the duchess loomed over her and repeatedly attempted to force her to sign a document that agreed to the appointment of Conroy as her private secretary – in effect, to become the controller of her affairs and money. But Victoria, as she later wrote, “resisted in spite of my illness, and their harshness”. She was determined to defy her mother’s drive for power.

The king, too, was resolute. Although by now very unwell himself, he was determined not to give up on life until Victoria turned 18. He hated the duchess and the last thing he wanted was for her to take power. Every day, he struggled on, willing himself not to die.

“Today is my 18th birthday! How old!” mused the princess on 24 May 1837. It was a giant gala day for the country. Kensington was festooned with banners and there was an official reception at the palace and a large ball in the evening. For the duchess, however, it was a day of despair. Victoria was 18 – and the king was still alive.

The duchess and Conroy redoubled their efforts to force Victoria to agree to appoint Conroy as her private secretary or treasurer, or to a regency until she was 21. They told her that the country only esteemed her because of her mother; they begged and threatened – and Conroy declared she should be locked up and denied food. Victoria stayed strong and, luckily for her, she did not have long to wait.

In the early hours of 20 June 1837, the king finally died. At six o’ clock in the morning, in Kensington Palace in London, Victoria stood in her nightwear as the archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chamberlain knelt before her and informed her that she was now queen. Her first act was to ask for an hour alone. Then she moved her bed from her mother’s room.

She was queen – without ‘mamma’ – of the greatest country in Europe and she had succeeded against great odds, mainly aimed at her by her own mother.

Our vision of Victoria might be of an elderly matron, dressed in dour black, unsmiling and pronouncing that “we are not amused”. But she was a vibrant young woman who succeeded to the throne despite the expectations of many that she would never become queen. “I shall ever remember this day as the proudest of my life,” wrote Victoria on 28 June 1838, the day of her coronation. She had deserved her triumph – and all the pride. ■



MOTHER SUPERIOR

The Duchess of Kent (1786–1861), whose influence waned following her daughter Victoria’s coronation

BREAKING NEWS

The Lord Chamberlain and the archbishop of Canterbury arrive at Kensington Palace to inform Victoria of William IV's death. At the age of 18, she was now queen



GETTY IMAGES

Victoria was a vibrant young woman who succeeded to the throne despite the expectations of many



Elizabeth II

THE QUEEN WHO SAVED *the* ROYALS

Britain's current Queen was an accidental royal heir, but she has become one of the country's most successful – and long-running – rulers. During her reign she has overseen the radical modernisation of the institution of monarchy, as **KATE WILLIAMS** relates

GETTY IMAGES / TOPFOTO



A BLAZE OF PATRIOTISM

Elizabeth was just 27 when she was crowned in Westminster Abbey. This photograph shows her wearing the blue ribbon of the Order of the Garter and a diamond and pearl crown made for Queen Victoria

OPPOSITE PAGE:

The Queen photographed on a state visit to Slovakia in 2008



On 10 December 1936, Elizabeth, Princess of York, aged just 10, was at home with her sister Margaret in 145 Piccadilly, Hyde Park. She heard shouts from outside – cries of “God Save the King”. A footman told her that the king had abdicated. She dashed upstairs to tell her sister: “Uncle David is going away and isn’t coming back, and papa is going to be king?” “Does that mean that you will have to be queen one day?” asked Margaret, who was only six. “Yes, some day,” said the princess. “Poor you,” said Margaret.

Elizabeth II was, like Victoria and Elizabeth I before her, never meant to be queen. Born on 21 April 1926, little Elizabeth Alexandra Mary was intended for, in the words of her mother, “a happy marriage”, but little more. Twenty-six years later she became Queen, and one of the most famous women in the world.

Until the abdication of Edward VIII, who gave up the crown to marry Wallis Simpson, Elizabeth and Margaret led, by royal standards, a sheltered life. The abdication changed everything. The family moved to Buckingham Palace and their father, the new George VI, struggled with the weight of responsibility. Elizabeth never forgave her uncle for pitching her father into the role of monarch, especially as he had to reign through a punishing war.

As Britain celebrated the end of the Second World War, on VE Day, George VI and his wife (also Queen Elizabeth) waved from the balcony and the young Elizabeth and Margaret went incognito in the crowd. But, just as Churchill would lose his first postwar election, so the country was moving towards the idea of a new monarch. Two years later Elizabeth married Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark at Westminster Abbey. In response to proposals that the marriage should be low key, Churchill hailed it as a “flash of colour on the hard road we have to travel” – and the marriage was turned into a celebration of renewal. Prince Charles was born in 1948 and Princess

Anne in 1950. Young, hopeful and a mother of small children, Princess Elizabeth captured all the media attention.

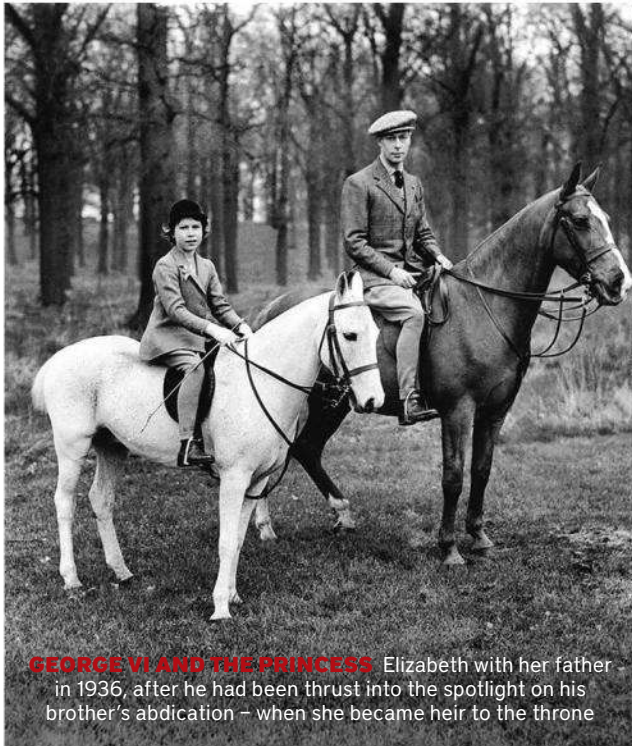
On 6 February 1952, Elizabeth and Philip were in Kenya, staying in an isolated lodge when they received the news of George VI’s death. The tour was cut short and Elizabeth returned home to assume her new role. Winston Churchill wept copiously and complained that he didn’t know the new Queen and “she was only a child”.

But Elizabeth proved herself adept in the role. “I no longer feel anxious or worried,” she said. “I don’t know what it is – but I have lost all my timidity somehow in becoming the sovereign and having to receive the prime minister.” Churchill quickly changed his mind. “All the film people in the world, if they had scoured the globe, could not have found anyone so suited to the part,” he decided. On 2 June 1953, Elizabeth was crowned in a blaze of patriotism. News of Edmund Hillary’s conquest of Everest came through on the same day, and the papers proclaimed a new Elizabethan age.

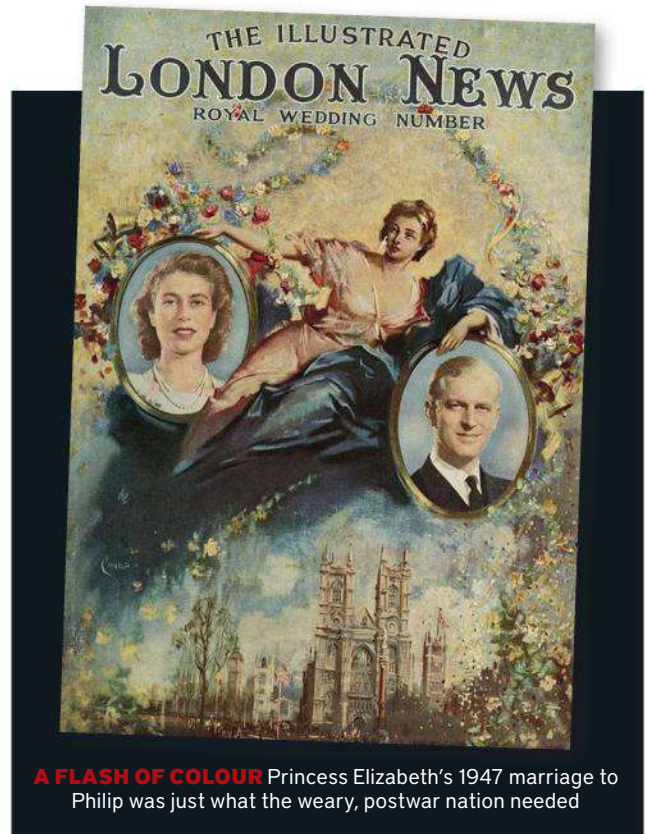
It was an age of change, for the British empire was contracting as its subject peoples demanded independence. Between 1945 and 1965, the numbers governed by the empire dropped from 700 million to 5 million. George VI had seen himself as a king of empire; the Queen became a queen of Commonwealth.

The Queen is Britain’s most travelled monarch, thanks to the invention of air travel. In 1953–54, she took a six month tour of the Commonwealth, travelling 10,000 miles by air in Australia alone. The greatest Commonwealth crisis was in 1965 when Ian Smith, prime minister of Rhodesia, refused moves towards majority rule and argued with British prime minister Harold Wilson, who pushed for the enfranchisement of the black population. Smith declared Rhodesia an independent country under the Queen, a de facto Commonwealth country. Wilson recalled the high commissioner and put sanctions in place, and Smith’s loyalty to the Queen was

All the film people in the world, if they had scoured the globe, “could not have found anyone so suited to the part”, Winston Churchill decided



GEORGE VI AND THE PRINCESS Elizabeth with her father in 1936, after he had been thrust into the spotlight on his brother's abdication – when she became heir to the throne



A FLASH OF COLOUR Princess Elizabeth's 1947 marriage to Philip was just what the weary, postwar nation needed



COMMONWEALTH QUEEN
The recently crowned Queen and her husband, Prince Philip, meet Prince Tungi of Tonga on 26 December 1953, during a six-month tour of the Commonwealth countries



A QUEEN BUT ALSO A WIFE AND A MOTHER
Elizabeth married Prince Philip in 1947 and they had four children (clockwise from left): Anne, Charles (the oldest), Andrew and Edward – shown in 1968

refused – but the Smith regime continued until the new Zimbabwe-Rhodesia was born in 1979.

Alongside extensive foreign visiting, the Queen's legacy as a monarch is in her political neutrality. As a teenager Elizabeth was schooled in history and constitutional affairs and, as Queen, she exemplified the ideal of the constitutional monarch: that they should not meddle in political affairs. In 1957 she received her first significant criticism after Anthony Eden resigned as prime minister. The Conservative party had no proper system for electing a leader, and the Queen called on Harold Macmillan to be prime minister on the advice of Churchill and the Marquess of Salisbury, who had spoken to the cabinet. To some, who had expected Rab Butler to be the successor, it looked like favouritism.

When Macmillan resigned in 1963, Alex Douglas Home was selected – and observers accused Macmillan of

manipulating the process to again avoid Butler. In 1965, a proper mechanism was brought in to find a leader – separate from the Queen. Henceforth, she was careful not to appear to favour any party or individual.

We will never know which prime minister she preferred. Leftwing prime ministers judged her to the right, but the Conservative leader Mrs Thatcher despaired of the Queen as the “kind of woman who could vote SDP”.

In her time as monarch, the Queen has seen the media explode, with 24-hour news channels, internet news and social media. In her youth, the royal family could stay private – now it is impossible. Andrew was born in 1960 and Edward in 1964 and the idea of the royal family fascinated the country. In 1977, despite the Sex Pistols, whose songs attacked deference to the crown, the silver jubilee was an explosion of street parties and patriotism.

GETTY IMAGES

In September 2015 Queen Elizabeth will overtake Victoria as Britain's longest reigning monarch

However the Queen's visit to Northern Ireland was brief and heavily policed: she did not disembark from the royal yacht in Belfast. In 1979, the Queen's relative and Philip's uncle, Lord Mountbatten, was killed by an IRA bomb.

In the 1980s, the monarchy appeared to be riding high. Millions watched the wedding of the Prince of Wales to Lady Diana Spencer in 1981, with all its fairytale trappings. Prince William was born the following year and Prince Harry in 1984. Prince Andrew married Sarah Ferguson in 1986. The new Princess of Wales and Duchess of York seemed to breathe fresh air into the monarchy and the crowds were fascinated by Diana.

The fairytale didn't last. In 1992, Prince Andrew separated from Sarah, Princess Anne divorced her husband, and Andrew Morton's bombshell book *Diana: Her True Story* was published. The Queen was pelted with eggs on a visit to the German city of Dresden – heavily bombed in the Second World War. Windsor Castle was damaged by fire in November 1992, on the Queen's 45th wedding anniversary. The government said it would pay for repairs, prompting an outcry. The plans were abolished and the prime minister, John Major, announced that the Queen was to pay income tax for the first time. After the fire, the Queen referred to the year as her *annus horribilis* (horrible year) but it was not over – in December, the Prince and Princess of Wales announced their separation.

The public face of the monarchy continued to sink, particularly under the uncertainty over the marriage of Charles and Diana, until in 1995 the Queen wrote to the pair suggesting a divorce. Charles and Diana divorced the following year.

On 31 August 1997, the car carrying Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed crashed in Paris. Fayed and the driver were killed. The princess died later, at 4am. The Queen, Prince Philip, Prince Charles and Harry were in Balmoral Castle, the Scottish holiday home to the royal family, and decided to remain there.

This decision prompted public fury. "Show us you care," pleaded the *Express* newspaper. The Queen finally returned to London



The Queen makes her *annus horribilis* speech in 1992, perhaps the lowest point of an otherwise happy reign

and addressed the nation, praising Diana's warmth and talking of her feelings as a "grandmother". Active hostility was dispelled, but enthusiasm for the royals remained muted.

The golden jubilee celebrations in June 2002, coming so soon after the deaths of the Queen's sister in February that year and of her mother in March, were comparatively low key. Similarly, there was little public celebration for the marriage of Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles in 2005.

In recent years, the currency of the monarchy has risen alongside the increasing profile of the young royals. The wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton in 2011 was a patriotic pageant – followed by a huge extravaganza for the diamond jubilee in 2012, coming just before the first Olympics in Britain since 1948.

For the Queen, her most important role in recent years has been creating links with Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In 2011, she made a state visit to Ireland and gave a significant speech about "things we would wish had been done differently or not at all".

In 2012, as part of her jubilee tour, she visited Northern Ireland and met Martin McGuinness, deputy first minister and a former IRA leader. In 2014, the Irish president, Michael Higgins, made his first state visit – and talked of "crafting a future that offers hope and opportunity for the British and Irish people", an expression of peace and unity that seemed impossible in the 1970s.

The Queen celebrated her 89th birthday in April and in September she will overtake Queen Victoria as Britain's longest reigning monarch (63 years and seven months, timed from her accession to the crown on the death of her father George VI). For many, she has been the most successful, thanks to her impartiality, attention to duty and demanding schedules of travel and engagement.

During Elizabeth's reign, the British monarchy caught up with monarchies across Europe and allowed women the same rights to the throne as men. In 2013, it was decreed that the firstborn gets the job, whether male or female. Elizabeth II has proved, above all, that a woman can do the job just as well as a man. ■



LET BYGONES BE BYGONES

Britain has had a troubled relationship with Northern Ireland but in 2012, in a mood of hope, the Queen met former IRA leader Martin McGuinness

QUEENS V THE CROW

POWER AND INFLUENCE – JUST NOT THE THRONE

➤ How the **MEDIEVAL QUEENS** shaped their husbands' reigns

➤ The controversial conclusion to the marriage of Henry VIII and **CATHERINE OF ARAGON**

➤ Was Henry VIII's second wife **ANNE BOLEYN** unfairly executed?

➤ **LADY JANE GREY**, the teenage 'queen' who ruled for just nine days

➤ Five **ROYAL MISTRESSES** who intrigued a nation

WITHOUT OWN

BRIDGEMAN

ELIZABETH OF YORK

Her marriage to the newly crowned Henry VII legitimised the House of Tudor's claim to the English throne





Medieval QUEENS

Although none would rule in their own right, the medieval queens of England played significant roles in the country's governance, as **LISA HILTON** reveals

The story of English medieval queens begins with a French princess. In 856, a 12-year-old girl named Judith, the daughter of King Charles of West Francia, was married to Æthelwulf, the ruler of the West Saxons. After his bride was crowned, King Æthelwulf gave her the title of 'queen,' which, until then, had not been the custom of Anglo-Saxon royals. The concept of queenship, while never constitutional in the medieval period, evolved considerably between the 11th and the 16th centuries. England knew 20 queens between 1066 and 1503. While each of these women was, of necessity, notable in her own right, the following five were perhaps most influential as consorts, before queenship was revolutionised under the country's first ruling queen, Mary Tudor.

1 Matilda of Flanders (1031–83)

William the Conqueror's queen was both diminutive and determined

Descended from the ancient line of the Counts of Flanders, Matilda was apparently less than enthusiastic when she received a proposal from the “bastard” Duke William of Normandy. There were published claims that she only agreed when William forced his way into her bedroom in the city of Lille and gave her a beating.

This ‘romantic’ gesture led to Matilda’s betrothal to William in 1049, followed by marriage two years later. Normandy was a primitive, backward region, considered a violent place even by the standards of the age, and Matilda’s first years of marriage were dominated by her husband’s constant armed struggles to control his aristocracy and defend his territories. In 1066, when William was preparing for war against England, Matilda ruled Normandy on behalf of her 14-year-old son Robert, the eldest of her seven children. The *Mora*, the large, brightly painted ship in which William set sail on the campaign, was a gift from his wife.

Matilda governed Normandy for two years after her husband’s victory at the battle of Hastings, travelling to her new home in England in the spring of 1068, where she was crowned and consecrated at Westminster Abbey. This ceremony confirmed three elements of English queenship for the first time: that the queen was appointed by God, that she shared royal power, and that she was placed to rule over the people. Thus queenship became a sacred office, one which shared in the mystery of the royal divine right.

Matilda’s activities as queen remained principally focused in Normandy, where she continued to act as regent, though she did interest herself in her newly acquired English lands, granting charters and manors in Dorset and

Essex, and founding a market at Tewkesbury. Her foundation of the Holy Trinity abbey at Caen, where her daughters were educated, established the tradition of pious learning which was to be followed by many of her successors.

Her marriage to William gave every appearance of being a successful partnership, while her abilities as a ruler, as well as her family alliances, provided him with the strength and stability to establish and maintain his dominions across the English Channel. The Conqueror was wretched at the death of his tiny, determined wife. Although Matilda’s reign was brief, she proved exemplary in her role as England’s first Norman queen.

With Matilda’s coronation and consecration, queenship became a sacred office

While William was busy invading England, Matilda governed Normandy for two years



2 Matilda of Boulogne (c1103–52)

With her husband King Stephen imprisoned, Matilda fought a bloody civil war

Matilda of Boulogne is much less known than her contemporary and rival, the Empress Matilda, the daughter of Henry I and wife of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V. Yet the two women had more in common than their name. Both were descended through their mothers from the royal Anglo-Saxon line, both were married to power-hungry men, and both were determined to battle to defend the rights of their sons.

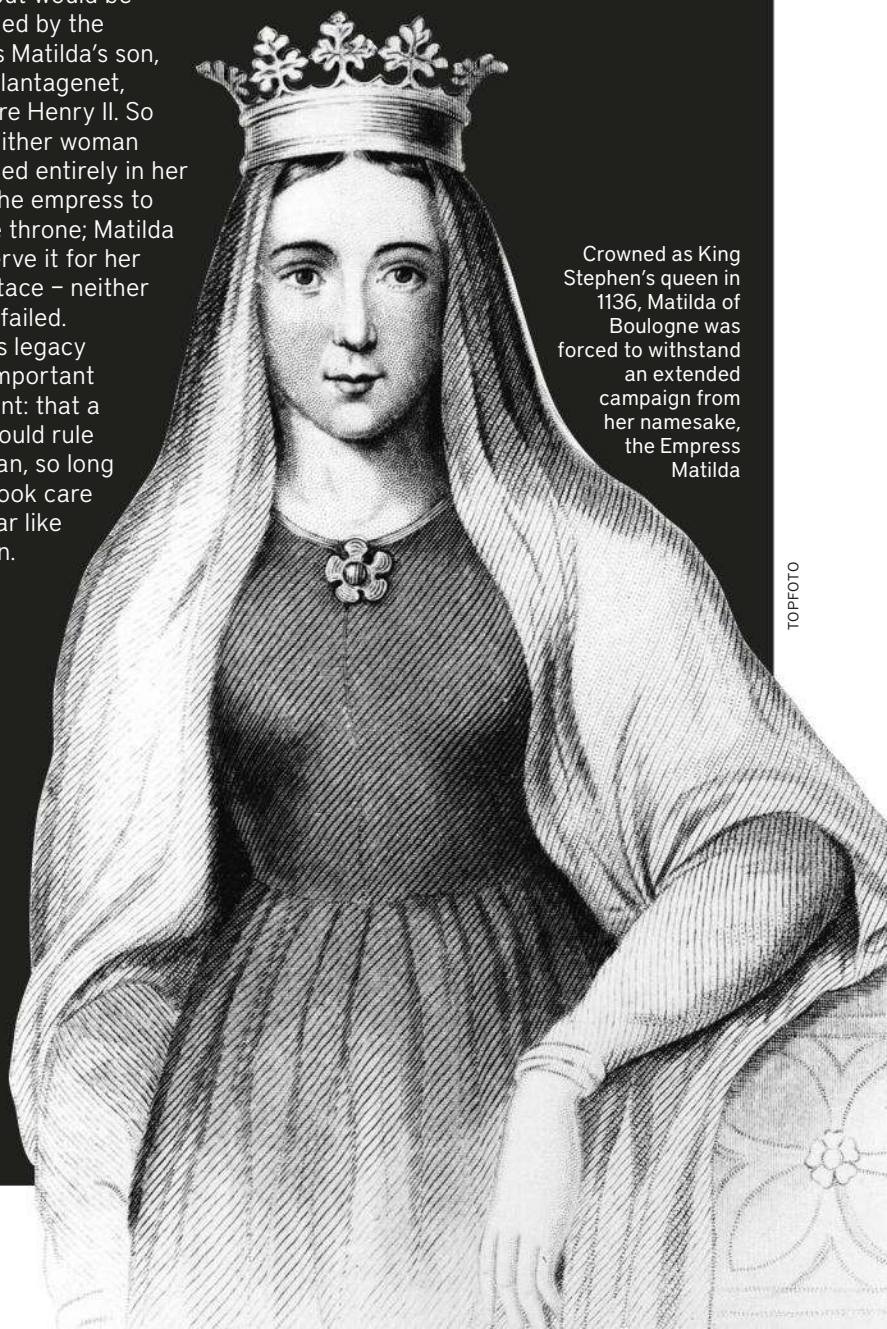
Matilda's queenship arose from the dynastic policy adopted by William the Conqueror's son Henry I after the death of his own male heir in 1120. Matilda was the daughter of the powerful Count of Boulogne and Henry arranged for her to marry his nephew Stephen who had a strong claim to the English crown. After Henry's death in 1135, Stephen was challenged for the throne by the Empress Matilda. Though, on his deathbed, Henry had made those around him swear allegiance to the empress, her claim was contested by many, while Stephen's actions took no account of legal niceties.

Just days after Henry's death, Stephen rode to London and, in a bloodless coup, took the crown before the empress even had time to set out. At this point, Matilda of Boulogne and Stephen had been married 10 years and had four children. The family were immediately caught up in propaganda exercises designed to shore up their newly acquired royal status. Matilda was crowned at Westminster Abbey in 1136 and suitably magnificent betrothals were arranged for her offspring. But hers and Stephen's position was precarious and, in 1139, the empress launched an invasion. Civil war continued for the next 19 years, a period subsequently known as the Anarchy. When Stephen was imprisoned, Matilda took on the

leadership of their cause herself, directing the royal armies, holding courts to garner funds and negotiating hostages. Unlike the empress, whose 'manly' behaviour attracted much criticism, Matilda was always careful to present herself in a 'feminine' manner, alert to the hostility attached to ruling women even as she acted as a general and diplomat.

A compromise was finally agreed whereby Stephen remained on the throne but would be succeeded by the Empress Matilda's son, Henry Plantagenet, the future Henry II. So while neither woman succeeded entirely in her aims – the empress to take the throne; Matilda to preserve it for her son Eustace – neither entirely failed. Matilda's legacy set an important precedent: that a queen could rule like a man, so long as she took care to appear like a woman.

Matilda was careful to present herself in a 'feminine' manner, always alert to the hostility attached to ruling women



Crowned as King Stephen's queen in 1136, Matilda of Boulogne was forced to withstand an extended campaign from her namesake, the Empress Matilda

TOP PHOTO



Isabella and her lover Roger Mortimer lead their troops in their campaign to overthrow her husband, Edward II

3 Isabella of France (1295–1358)

The 'She-Wolf of France' deposed an anointed king – her own husband, Edward II

Isabella was 12 when her betrothal to Edward, Prince of Wales, heir to King Edward I, culminated in marriage in 1308. A princess of France, she grew up believing she would become queen of England, yet her first experiences in her adopted country were distressing and confusing. Her husband showed no interest in her, preferring to spend his time with the Earl of Cornwall, Piers Gaveston, who peacocked about the court decked out in Isabella's own jewels.

The couple had four children, but if Isabella hoped for a more fulfilling relationship after Gaveston's fall and Edward becoming king (in 1307), she was wrong. He was soon in thrall to another favourite, Hugh Despenser, and Isabella embarked on an adulterous relationship with Roger Mortimer, one of Edward's most powerful associates.

Loathing of Despenser and despair at Edward's tyranny began to coalesce into plans for rebellion, of which Isabella, the quiet, modest queen, emerged as the leader. She departed for the Paris court of her brother, the king of France, where she proclaimed her status as a wronged wife – and, with Mortimer's help, began to raise an army. Isabella defied both her brother and the pope to live openly with Mortimer and, by autumn 1326, the couple had raised a small force and sailed for the east

The implications of Isabella's radical courage reverberated down the centuries

coast of England. The following year, Edward II, "sobbing and fainting," was forced to abdicate in favour of his son, Edward III.

Isabella had achieved the unthinkable: the deposition of an anointed king. For almost four years, she and Mortimer governed in the young Edward's name, but Mortimer's ambition proved intolerable to the king and he was executed for multiple crimes in 1330. Disgraced, Isabella was placed under house arrest for several years. Contrary to popular accounts that suggested she ended her days in madness and poverty, Isabella was restored to an influential diplomatic role towards the end of her life. She may have been a bad woman, but she was a rather magnificent queen, and the implications of her radical courage reverberated down the centuries.



Catherine de Valois marries Henry V in 1420. Two years later, Henry was dead, leaving Catherine a widow and nine-month-old Henry VI as king

4 Catherine de Valois (1401–37)

The French princess's second marriage laid the foundations of Tudor rule

Catherine and her husband, King Henry V, were undoubtedly the poster couple of European royalty. Young, blond and beautiful, their marriage in 1420 was destined to end years of war and bring together France (of which Catherine was a princess) and England. Yet, just a year after her coronation, Catherine found herself a widow with a young son after Henry's death, probably from dysentery.

Henry VI became king at the age of nine months, but his mother was excluded from governing in his place while both her natural and adoptive countries attempted to exploit her dynastic importance to their own ends. Her brother Charles VII claimed that Salic law (by which a woman could not inherit)

barred the young Henry from the French crown, while the English argued that Henry's maternal ancestry supported his claim. Catherine was dumped at Windsor Castle and denied any role in her own fate.

Recklessly, she began a scandalous affair with Edmund Beaufort, a descendant of the bastard line of the royal duke John of Gaunt. The government swiftly passed a bill decreeing that she could not marry without her son's consent. Defiantly, four years later, Catherine married another man who – despite her grandson Henry VII's later efforts to demonstrate otherwise at the end of the century – was an absolute nobody. Owen Tudor was merely a servant in

Catherine's household, but whatever the royal council thought, they could not deny the validity of the marriage, which was acknowledged by an act of parliament in 1432.

Catherine gave birth to two sons, Edmund and Jasper, before her death five years later. The Tudor path to the throne began when Henry VI ennobled his half brothers in 1452, marrying the former to Margaret Beaufort, a relative of his mother's old flame Edmund.

Like the earlier French queen Isabella, Catherine was prepared to defy the strict laws of queenly conduct and enter a relationship founded on love. The consequences of her actions were instrumental to the romantic, ruthless ascent of the Tudor dynasty.

5 Elizabeth of York (1466–1503)

Elizabeth held a stronger claim to the throne than even her husband, Henry VII

Elizabeth represented the consolidation of Tudor power. The eldest daughter of Edward IV and his commoner queen, Elizabeth Woodville, she united the warring houses of York and Lancaster when, in 1486, she married Henry Tudor – aka the recently crowned Henry VII. It was Elizabeth's royal blood that emphasised her husband's extremely dilute quantity of the same – yet the very vitality of her lineage to the Tudor cause led to her marginalisation as a queen. Nonetheless, without Elizabeth, there could have been no Tudor monarchy.

Elizabeth's childhood encapsulated the murderous turbulence of the last phase of the Wars of the Roses between the Yorkists and the Lancastrians. As a three-year-old, she was betrothed to the nephew of the 'Kingmaker,' her father's one-time ally (but ultimate enemy), the Earl of Warwick. In 1470, with her father in exile, Elizabeth fled to sanctuary with her mother at Westminster Abbey, while Henry VI was paraded through the streets and proclaimed once more as king (he had been ousted in 1461 by Edward, who would retake the throne in 1471).

Aged nine, Elizabeth was

betrothed to the Dauphin of France but, at 16, was living in sanctuary once more following her father Edward's death in 1483. Elizabeth was soon declared a bastard after her uncle Richard III usurped the throne and declared her parents' marriage invalid. He also probably murdered her two brothers, Edward V and Prince Richard.

Nevertheless, with a grasp of political realities later inherited by her granddaughter Elizabeth I, Elizabeth embarked on a relationship with Richard. The king was obliged to declare publicly that he had no intention of marrying his disinherited niece, but Elizabeth wrote that she belonged to him "in all". Her eventual marriage to Henry Tudor after his victory over Richard III at Bosworth in 1485 appears less as the fulfilment of the Lancastrian's dreams than as a submission to those same political realities. The pope had declared

that only marriage to Elizabeth would validate Henry's claim to the throne, yet Henry was careful to promote his own case over hers, even delaying her coronation by two years. The Tudors may have been keen to forget that Elizabeth's claim to the throne far outweighed their own but, although she became a somewhat shadowy figure after her marriage, it was her claim that made the last of England's medieval queens perhaps its most significant. ■

Elizabeth possessed a grasp of political realities that was later inherited by her granddaughter, Elizabeth I



Elizabeth of York was, in turn, daughter, sister, niece and wife of four successive kings – and mother of a fifth, Henry VIII



PARAGON OF VIRTUE

A c1510 portrait of Catherine of Aragon who, following her marriage to Prince Arthur, "remained intact and uncorrupted as the day she left her mother's womb"

OPPOSITE PAGE:

Henry VIII, seen here in c1516, feared his divorce from Catherine would provoke war with Spain



Catherine *of* ARAGON

SPAIN'S *VIRGIN* QUEEN?

When Henry VIII was attempting to divorce Catherine of Aragon, the question of whether she had enjoyed a sexual relationship with his brother became of vital importance.

GILES TREMLETT looks at the Spanish perspective

Rarely has an English queen consort's virginity been of quite such public importance. Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, was famously pious and virtuous. But was she a virgin when, shortly after Henry came to the throne in 1509, they married? The answer to the question matters because, as he sought a way to divorce her almost two decades later, it mattered to Henry.

At the age of 15, Catherine had originally travelled to London from her native Spain in order to wed Henry's older brother, Arthur. They married in splendid pomp at St Paul's Cathedral in November 1501 but, just 20 weeks later, Arthur, also aged 15, died. Catherine's parents Ferdinand and Isabel did not want to lose the English match, so they arranged a second marriage to Henry VII's other son, the future Henry VIII. The pope's permission was sought, and obtained, to allow Henry to marry his brother's wife when he came of marriageable age. However, the couple had to wait for the death of his father, who had financial concerns about the betrothal, before they could wed.

It was only after 18 years with his Spanish wife that Henry began fretting about whether Pope Julius II had overstepped his powers in authorising their marriage. His conscience, he said, was troubled. Had they been living in sin all that time? And was God punishing them for it by not providing a male heir to the crown?

When, in 1527, Henry asked Cardinal Wolsey to come up with an answer to the first of these questions, he was convinced the answer would be 'yes'. That would free him to marry Anne Boleyn, the young woman who fired his passion and, from whose young womb, a male heir could come. He could also dispose of Catherine in a manner that was sanctioned by the church.

But Catherine soon threw Henry's argument into disarray. She and Arthur, she claimed, had never had full sex. They had slept together only seven times and the results had been disappointing. Catherine had "remained

as intact and uncorrupted as the day she left her mother's womb". The sexual impediments to their marriage that could only be overcome by a papal dispensation had never existed. Henry's argument, Catherine was saying, was irrelevant. They had been properly married – and still were.

It would be the first of many successful delaying tactics employed by Catherine, often with the help of her nephew, the powerful Holy Roman Emperor Charles V – whose dominions included Spain's growing empire and the Netherlands.

It took a further two years before a remarkable 'divorce' trial finally started at Blackfriars monastery in London. Pope Clement VII sent Lorenzo Campeggio, a gout-ridden Italian cardinal, to join Wolsey as a judge. Members of Arthur's old court were asked to cast their minds back nearly three decades. Had the young couple had sex? Witnesses were convinced they had. One said that Arthur had staggered out of their wedding bed the following morning demanding ale to quench his thirst. "I have this Night been in the midst of Spain, which is a hot region, and that journey maketh me so dry," he reportedly said. "And if thou hadst been under that hot climate, thou wouldst have been drier than I." But these were English witnesses in an English court being watched by their king. What did Spaniards have to say?

The testimonies of Catherine's own court have largely been ignored. But some of their evidence is readily available, sitting in the transcript of a hearing at Zaragoza Cathedral, in north-east Spain, overseen by the Abbot of Veruela, Miguel Jiménez de Embum. The manuscript, conserved in Madrid's Real Academia de la Historia, tells a very different story.

In the Spaniards' version of events, Arthur becomes a sickly young man incapable of fulfilling his marital, sexual and dynastic obligations in the wedding-night bed. "Prince Arthur got up very early, which surprised everyone a lot," said a former boy in Catherine's service, Juan de Gamarra. "Francisca de Cáceres, who was in charge of dressing and undressing the queen and whom she liked and confided in a lot, was looking sad and telling the

Had the young Arthur and Catherine had sex? Witnesses were convinced they had

other ladies that nothing had passed between Prince Arthur and his wife, which surprised everyone and made them laugh at him.” Catherine had been desolate. “I fear he will never be able to have [sexual] relations with me,” she said.

Henry’s divorce was a Europe-wide problem that threatened to spark war between the king and Charles V. The latter leaned heavily on the pope. He simply could not believe Henry would do “a thing so monstrous of itself and wholly without precedent in ancient or modern history”. Orders were sent out to track down those who had travelled to England with Catherine for her first wedding. Even her Moorish slave girl Catalina, who had returned to Spain to marry a bow-maker, was to be found.

A questionnaire was drawn up, ranging from the biologically precise to the absurd. Was there blood on the marital sheets? Did Henry ever brag that it was he who took Catherine’s virginity? Did Arthur look impotent? Had a group of doctors declared, after Catherine fell ill, that “the cause of her sickness was that she was still a virgin”? And did they also say this could be cured if she married “a man who had skills with women”? Answers were to be sent on to Rome where, in another victory for Catherine, the case had been moved before the Blackfriars court could reach a verdict.

Her nephew’s ambassadors in Rome became devoted agents for a woman who some saw as a living saint. One of them, Dr Ortiz, even wrote to Charles’s wife, Isabella, urging her to collect Catherine’s letters as the future relics of a holy martyr.

Catherine won and lost her case. She won because Rome declared her marriage safe. She lost because Henry had chosen Thomas Cranmer as the new archbishop of Canterbury in 1533, knowing he would immediately grant a divorce.

Catherine refused to accept Cranmer’s decision. She was queen and Anne Boleyn, who had now married Henry, remained “the scandal of Christendom”. Only Catherine’s death from natural causes in January 1536 finally relieved the tension between England and Spain.



VIRGIN KING? A portrait of the teenage Prince Arthur, from c1499. According to a Spanish manuscript, the young king later failed to fulfill his marital ‘duties’

In her final days, Catherine retreated to her chamber and refused to see anyone who would not address her as queen. Charles’s ambassador Eustace Chapuys was one of her last visitors. He later wrote that she was “the most virtuous woman I have ever known and the highest hearted, but too quick to trust that others were like herself, and too slow to do a little ill that much good might come of it”.

Catherine had rebuffed Chapuys’ attempts to get her backing for an English rebellion on her behalf. She did not want war. “I would rather die than be the cause of it,” she calmly observed. Her twin aims while married to Henry had been to draw Spain and England together, and to provide an heir to the throne. At her death, it looked as though she had failed at both. Even Catherine could not have imagined that her daughter, Mary, would go on to become England’s queen – or that Mary would give England another Spanish royal consort, Charles’s son Philip. ■



WHY DID ANNE BOLEYN HAVE TO DIE?

Was Henry VIII's second wife ensnared by a conspiracy, the victim of her own loose tongue, or simply guilty as charged? **SUZANNAH LIPSCOMB** tries to unearth the real reason why the king sent his queen to the block



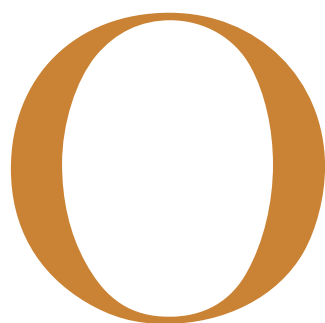
IS THIS ANNE?

With all images of the disgraced queen destroyed after her execution, in early 2015 face-recognition software believed this painting, known as the 'Nidd Hall' portrait, to be the likeliest surviving artwork of Anne Boleyn

OPPOSITE PAGE:

The red and white rose, the symbol of the House of Tudor, lived on after the dynasty's demise. This is a detail from wallpaper produced for the houses of parliament in London in the 19th century





On the morning of 19 May 1536, Anne Boleyn climbed the scaffold erected on Tower Green, within the walls of the Tower of London. She gave a speech praising the goodness and mercy of the king, and asked those gathered to pray for her. Then she removed her fine, ermine-trimmed gown, and knelt down. The expensive French executioner that Henry VIII had commissioned swung his sword and “divided her neck at a blow”.

Her death is so familiar to us that it is hard to imagine how shocking it would have been: the queen of England executed on charges of adultery, incest and conspiring the king’s death. And not just any queen: this was the woman for whom Henry VIII had abandoned his wife of nearly 24 years, waited seven long years to wed, and even revolutionised his country’s church. Yet, just three years later, her head was off – and the reason for her death remains one of the great mysteries of English history.

Had the couple’s relationship gone into terminal decline, prompting Henry to invent the charges against his wife? Was the king’s chief minister Thomas Cromwell responsible for Anne’s demise? Or was she simply guilty of the charges laid against her?

There are a number of undisputed facts relating to Anne’s fall. On Sunday 30 April 1536, Mark Smeaton, a musician from the queen’s household, was arrested and then taken to Cromwell’s house in Stepney in east London for interrogation. On the same evening, the king postponed a trip with Anne to Calais, planned for 2 May.

The following day, Smeaton was moved to the Tower. Henry attended the May Day jousts at Greenwich on the south bank of the river Thames, but left abruptly on horseback with a small group of intimates. These included Sir Henry Norris, a personal servant and one of his closest friends, whom he questioned throughout the journey. At dawn the next day, Norris was taken to the Tower. Anne and her brother George, Lord Rochford, were also arrested.

On 4 and 5 May, more courtiers from the king’s privy chamber – William Brereton, Richard Page, Francis Weston, Thomas Wyatt and Francis Bryan – were arrested. The latter was questioned and released, but the others were imprisoned in the Tower. On 10 May, a grand jury indicted all of the accused, apart from Page and Wyatt. On 12 May, Smeaton, Brereton, Weston and Norris were tried and found guilty both of adultery with the queen and of conspiring the king’s death.

On 15 May, Anne and George were tried by a court of 26 peers presided over by the siblings’ uncle, the Duke of Norfolk. Both were found guilty of high treason. Two days later, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer declared the marriage of Henry and Anne null and, by 19 May, all six convicted had been executed. Later that day, Cranmer issued a dispensation allowing Henry and Jane Seymour to marry. They were wed 10 days later.

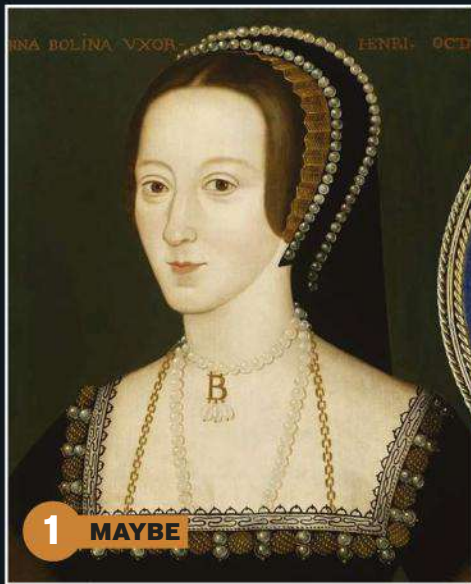


Anne’s guilt was, naturally, the official line. Writing to the bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, Thomas Cromwell stated with certainty – before Anne’s trial – that “the queen’s incontinent living was so rank and common that the ladies of her privy chamber could not conceal it”.

The key piece of evidence was undoubtedly the confession by the first man accused, Smeaton, that he had had sexual intercourse with the queen three times. Though it was probably obtained under torture, he never retracted his confession. Unlikely as it was to be true, it catapulted the investigation to a different, far more serious level. All subsequent evidence was tainted with a presumption of guilt. Henry VIII’s intimate questioning of Norris, and his promise of “pardon in case he would utter the truth”, must be understood in this light: whatever Norris said, or refused to say, it reinforced Henry’s conviction of his guilt.

Other evidence for Anne’s guilt is unclear – the trial documents do not survive. Her indictment, however, states that Anne “did falsely and traitorously procure by base conversations and kisses, touchings, gifts and other infamous incitations, divers of the king’s daily and familiar

The reason for Anne’s death remains one of the great mysteries of English history



Picturing Anne Boleyn

Do any accurate portraits survive?

Not only do we not know why Anne Boleyn died, we also don't know exactly what she looked like. Written accounts suggest she had black hair, dark, sparkling eyes, sallow skin and a long, elegant neck. One of her friends described her as "good looking enough"! However, no accepted portrait from Anne's lifetime survives, although there are several images that historians have argued are her.

1 The most familiar depictions of Anne are various reproductions of this glamorous portrait, in which she wears the famous B-pendant. The earliest dates from around 50 or 60 years after Anne's death, though they may derive from a portrait, now missing, that was produced in her lifetime.

2 Two versions of a 1526/27 miniature by the Flemish artist Lucas Horenbout are claimed to be of Anne, but this identification is problematic.

3 This chalk drawing by Hans Holbein bears the inscription "Anna Bolleyn Queen" in a later hand. It is unlikely to show Anne,

because of her state of undress. Also, it does not fit any other portrait type.

4 The only authenticated likeness of Anne produced during her lifetime is this commemorative portrait medal from 1534. The nose is damaged, but Anne's oval face and high cheekbones are evident.

5 The Chequers locket ring belonged to Anne's daughter Elizabeth I and was removed from her finger after her death in 1603. It incorporates two miniature enamel portraits: one

depicts an aged Elizabeth, while the other may be of Anne, or of Elizabeth in her youth.

6 The 'Nidd Hall' portrait, which shows 'Anne' in a gable hood, is strikingly similar to Holbein's later portrait of Henry VIII's next wife, Jane Seymour.

These contested portraits are unable to give us much insight into Anne's character. As art historian Brett Dolman pointed out, it is "historiographic laziness at best, wholly unreliable at worst" to use such images to posit a psychological profile of Anne Boleyn.



TIMELINE

The rise and fall of Anne Boleyn

Anne is born at Blickling, Norfolk, to Thomas Boleyn and his wife, Elizabeth. Historians debate whether Anne was born in 1501 or 1507; the former is more plausible

1501 (or possibly 1507)

Anne becomes a maid-of-honour to Margaret, Archduchess of Austria. She later serves Henry VIII's sister Mary (pictured), wife of the French king Louis XII



1513



Hans Holbein's familiar portrait of Henry VIII

1521

Anne is **recalled to England** by her father after seven years in France

Anne makes her first recorded appearance at Henry VIII's court as an actor in a pageant. At that time, Henry was having an affair with Anne's sister, Mary

1 March 1522

Henry VIII falls in love with Anne. A letter from him, dated to 1527, states that for more than one year Henry had been "struck by the dart of love" and asks Anne to "give herself body and heart to him"

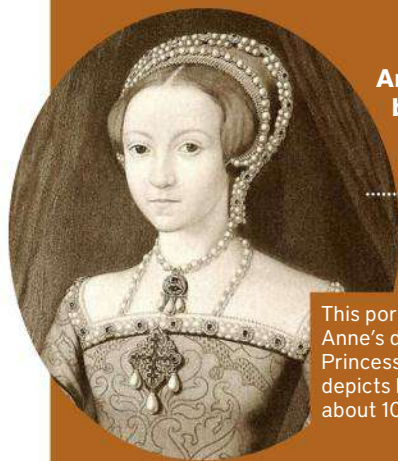
c1526

Anne marries Henry. The official wedding is held in January 1533, but they are probably married secretly at Dover in Kent the previous October. Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon is not annulled until May 1533

1532/33

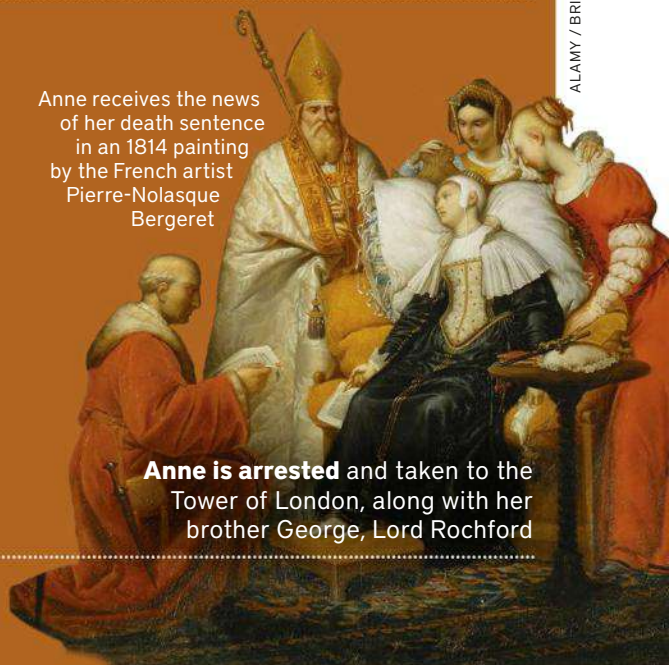
Anne gives birth to a daughter, Elizabeth

7 September 1533



This portrait of Anne's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, depicts her aged about 10

Anne receives the news of her death sentence in an 1814 painting by the French artist Pierre-Nolasque Bergeret



Anne miscarries a male foetus

29 January 1536

Anne is arrested and taken to the Tower of London, along with her brother George, Lord Rochford

2 May 1536

Anne is beheaded on Tower Green within the Tower of London

19 May 1536

servants to be her adulterers and concubines, so that several... yielded to her vile provocations". She even, it charges, "procured and incited her own natural brother... to violate her, alluring him with her tongue in the said George's mouth, and the said George's tongue in hers".



Certainly, Anne maintained her innocence. During her imprisonment, Sir William Kingston, constable of the Tower of London, reported Anne's remarks to Cromwell. His first letter details Anne's ardent declaration of innocence: "I am as clear from the company of man, as for sin... as I am clear from you, and the king's true wedded wife." The night before her execution, she swore "on peril of her soul's damnation" that she was innocent.

Some historians have favoured the explanation that Anne was the victim of a conspiracy by Thomas Cromwell and a court faction involving the Seymours, the family of the woman intended to become Henry's next wife. This rests upon a view of him as a pliable king whose courtiers could "bounce" him into action and tip him "by a crisis" into rejecting Anne. But why should Anne and Cromwell, erstwhile allies of a reformist bent, fall out? Differences of opinion are thought to have arisen over the use of funds from the dissolution of England's monasteries, as well as matters of foreign policy. These seem slender motives for destroying a queen.

Did Cromwell's court faction intend to replace Anne with Jane Seymour? Eustace Chapuys, ambassador for the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, mentioned Jane in a letter of 10 February 1536, reporting that Henry had sent her a gift of a purse full of sovereigns, accompanied by a letter. She did not open the letter, and Boleyn biographer Eric Ives speculated that it contained a summons to the royal bed, although we'll never know. Instead, she kissed

it and returned it, asking the messenger to tell the king that "there was no treasure in this world that she valued as much as her honour", and that if the king wanted to give her a present, she begged it might be at "such a time as God would be pleased to send her some advantageous marriage". Such a calculated reply is reminiscent of Anne during the days of her courtship with Henry. In response to Jane's coyness, Henry's love for her was said to have "marvellously increased".

Yet she was described as a lady whom the king "serves" – a telling word implying that he sought her as his 'courtly love' mistress. There is little evidence that, before Anne was accused of adultery, Henry had planned to make Jane his wife. Marriage to Jane was, surely, a symptom and a product of Anne's downfall, not a cause.

The only potentially pivotal piece of evidence for a conspiracy is a remark made by Cromwell to Chapuys after Anne's death. In a letter to Charles V, Chapuys wrote that Cromwell had told him "il se mist a fantasier et conspirer le dict affaire", which has been translated as "he set himself to devise and conspire the said affair", suggesting that Cromwell plotted against Anne.

Crucially, however, this phrase is often used out of context. The previous sentence states that "he himself [Cromwell] had been authorised and commissioned by the king to prosecute and bring to an end the mistress's trial, to do which he had taken considerable trouble". If we accept this account, it is impossible to dismiss Henry from the picture – Cromwell said he was not acting alone.

It has been proposed, therefore, that Henry asked Cromwell to get rid of Anne. The historian David Starkey suggested that "Anne's proud and abrasive character soon became intolerable to her husband". JJ Scarisbrick, author of the authoritative *Henry VIII*, agreed: "What had once been devastating infatuation turned into bloodthirsty loathing, for reasons we will never completely know."

But evidence for this view is taken from the writings of

Henry and Anne got angry, shouted, sulked and were jealous – but were also “merry” together

the ever-hopeful Chapuys. As a Catholic and a supporter of Catherine of Aragon, he referred to Anne as “the concubine” or “the she-devil”, and had made bitter assertions about the doomed state of Henry and Anne’s relationship even at the height of their happiness in late summer 1533 – even though Chapuys himself recognised that Henry and Anne had always been prone to “lovers’ quarrels”, and that the king’s character was very “changeable”.

It is true that Henry and Anne were direct with each other: they got angry, shouted and became jealous. But they were also frequently described as being “merry” together; it was an epithet still being applied to them during the autumn of 1535 – and one that was appended to their marriage more often than to any of Henry’s other unions. Boleyn scholar GW Bernard has described theirs as a “tumultuous relationship of sunshine and storms”.

Other historians have proposed that the miscarriage of a male foetus suffered by Anne in January 1536 led inexorably to her downfall. Did it cause Henry to believe that Anne would never be able to bear him an heir, and thus to consider the marriage doomed? Certainly, the king was reported to have shown “great disappointment and sorrow”. Chapuys wrote that Henry, during his visit to Anne’s chamber after the tragedy, said very little except: “I see that God will not give me male children.”

Henry then left Anne at Greenwich to convalesce while he went to Whitehall to mark the feast day of St Matthew. Chapuys interpreted this as showing that Henry had abandoned Anne, “whereas in former times he could hardly be one hour without her”. Clearly, the miscarriage was a great blow to both Henry and Anne, but another four months were to pass before Anne’s death, so demonstrating a direct link between the events is problematic.

Another story, reported third-hand by Chapuys, quotes Henry as telling a courtier that he had married Anne “seduced and constrained by *sortilèges*”. That last word translates as ‘sorcery, spells, charms’, giving rise to the suggestion that Anne Boleyn dabbled in witchcraft. Ives, though, pointed out that the primary English meaning of *sortilèges* at this time was ‘divination’, a translation that changes the meaning of Henry’s comment. It could imply he was induced to marry Anne by premarital prophecies that she would

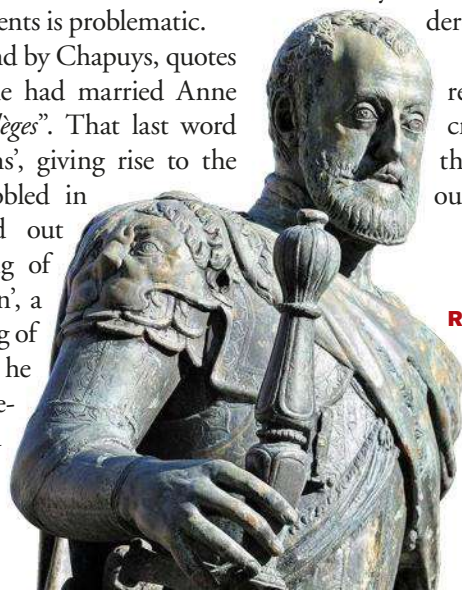
bear sons, or could refer to Henry’s earlier ‘bewitchment’ by Anne.

The idea that Henry had been “seduced by witchcraft” has become attached to another theory, which holds that the real reason for Anne’s ruin was that the foetus miscarried in January 1536 was deformed. According to Tudor specialist Retha Warnicke, the delivery of a “shapeless mass of flesh” proved in Henry’s mind that Anne was both a witch and adulterously promiscuous. But this description comes from a Catholic propagandist, Nicholas Sander, writing 50 years later; there is no contemporary evidence to sustain this salacious theory.

An event in April 1536 suggests that, just weeks before Anne was executed, Henry was still committed to his marriage. He had been increasing the pressure on Charles V to recognise Anne as his wife and, on 18 April, invited Chapuys to the court. Events that day were very deliberately staged: the ambassador attended mass and, as Henry and Anne descended from the royal pew to the chapel, she stopped and bowed to Chapuys. Etiquette dictated that he return the gesture – a significant diplomatic coup, because it implied recognition by the ambassador and, by extension, his emperor. It would, Bernard has argued, have been extraordinarily capricious of Henry to do so if he harboured intentions of ridding himself of her soon after.

So was it not guilt, nor a court coup, nor Henry’s hatred of Anne that led to her downfall but, rather, a terrible combination of malicious gossip and her own indiscretions? A poetic account written in June 1536 by Lancelot de Carles, secretary to the French ambassador, relates that one of Anne’s ladies-in-waiting, Elizabeth Browne, was accused of loose living. She made light of her own guilt by stating that “it was little in her case in comparison with that of the queen”. These words reached Cromwell who, according to de Carles, reported them to Henry; the king blanched and, very reluctantly, ordered him to investigate.

This aligns with Cromwell’s own retelling of the events. De Carles adds a crucial, though unsubstantiated, clause, that of Henry telling Cromwell: “If it turns out that your report, which I do not wish to



ROMAN RELUCTANCE

As Catherine of Aragon’s nephew, Charles V – Holy Roman Emperor – was wary of recognising Anne as Henry VIII’s wife



SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENT?

Édouard Cibot's painting from 1835 depicts Anne imprisoned in the Tower of London. The queen protested her innocence until the bitter and brutal end

believe, is untrue, you will receive pain of death in place of [the accused].” So Cromwell may have had reason to prove Anne’s guilt.

Given that Anne was accused of conspiring the king’s death (the only charge that actually constituted treason; consensual adultery was not covered by the treason law of 1352), it seems likely that the evidence used to demonstrate her guilt was a conversation she recalled – and William Kingston reported – with Norris.

Anne had asked Norris why he did not go through with his marriage. He had replied that “he wold tary a time”, leading her to taunt him with the fateful words “you loke for ded men’s showys; for yf owth cam to the king but good, you would loke to have me”. Norris’s flustered response – that “yf he should have any such thought, he

wold hys hed war of” – provoked her to retort that “she could undo him if she would”, and “ther with thay felle yowt” (“there with they fell out”).

The Treasons Act of 1534 held that even imagining the death of the king was treasonous, so Anne’s conversation with Norris was charged, reckless and, arguably, fatal – useful ammunition if Cromwell were looking for dirt. Was it, as Greg Walker, author of *Writing Under Tyranny*, has suggested, not what Anne did but what she said that made her appear guilty?

It’s this theory – that Anne was innocent but was caught out by her careless words – that’s the most persuasive. Henry was convinced by the charges levelled against her, a devastating blow from which he never recovered. For Anne, the consequences were far more terrible. ■

Even imagining the death of the king was treasonous, so Anne’s conversation was reckless



CENTRE OF ATTENTION

Henry VIII's six wives were (clockwise from top): Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard, Anne Boleyn, Catherine of Aragon, Katherine Parr and Jane Seymour

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Eustace Chapuys
(c1490–1556), the man who
observed Henry's court from
very close quarters



A WITNESS *to the* SIX WIVES

As a long-serving ambassador to the Tudor court, Eustace Chapuys was in the rare position of meeting all of Henry VIII's wives. **LAUREN MACKAY** reveals what his writings tell us about the various queens' characters

1 Catherine of Aragon

From beautiful warrior-queen to desolate estranged wife

Catherine of Aragon was the daughter of the power couple of Europe, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, and aunt to the powerful Holy Roman emperor Charles V. She was reputedly a blue-eyed, red-haired beauty who captured Henry's heart – and the hearts of her subjects – only to be discarded after more than 20 years of marriage when Henry met the beguiling Anne Boleyn. Catherine vehemently resisted attempts by Henry to replace her with Anne as his wife and queen, but she could not do this alone. Catherine needed a legal mind, someone who possessed diplomatic shrewdness, experience and cool reasoning, someone who could argue her cause before the king and maintain cordial relations between Charles V and Henry. That man was Eustace Chapuys, a gifted lawyer and diplomat at Charles's imperial court.

While the conflicting accounts of Catherine's character have been drawn more along the battle lines of the bitter divorce with Henry VIII, it is through Chapuys' dispatches that she is revealed to us as a fearless warrior queen – who defeated the Scots in battle in 1513 – and a vulnerable, desolate wife.

Catherine's admiration of Chapuys is evident in her correspondence with Charles: "You could not have chosen a better ambassador, his wisdom encourages and comforts me, and when my councillors through fear hesitate to answer the charges against me, he is always ready to undertake the burden of my defence... I consider him deserving of all your favour."

Catherine was cast aside by her husband and the court, and eventually neglected by her nephew Charles. And so Chapuys became her counsellor, advisor, advocate, life coach and her window to the world.

In 1536, with Catherine clearly ailing after her lengthy battle with Henry, Chapuys rushed to her bedside. He reported on what would be their last meeting: "She was pleased, out of sheer kindness and benevolence, and without any occasion or merit it on my part, to thank me for the many services which, she said, I had rendered her on former occasions, as well as the trouble I had taken in coming down to visit her, at a time too when, if it should please God to take her to Himself, it would at least be a consolation to die as it were in my arms, and not all alone like a beast."

Catherine died at Kimbolton Castle in Cambridgeshire as Chapuys was returning to London. In his final, intensely personal report, he reveals his deep affection for a woman who, in his view, could never be replaced as queen of England.

Chapuys reveals his deep affection for a woman who, in his view, could never be replaced as queen of England

Chapuys was bowled over by Catherine of Aragon's "sheer kindness and benevolence"



ART ARCHIVE

The strained relationship between Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell was a main focus of Hilary Mantel's novels *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, recently adapted by the BBC



2 Anne Boleyn

A beguiling combination of intelligence, insecurity and relentless ambition

Anne Boleyn's elusive personality and contradictory reputation continue to enthrall us, but it is through Chapuys' dispatches that she emerges as an enticingly unique creature: intelligent, impetuous and ambitious.

Anne often quarreled violently with Henry and we have Chapuys to thank for preserving several of her most evocative outbursts. He deftly captured her moods, her insecurities and growing frustrations as queen-in-waiting: "I see that some fine morning you [Henry] ... will cast me off. I have been waiting long, and might in the meanwhile have contracted some advantageous marriage... but alas! Farewell to my time and youth spent to no purpose at all."

Chapuys' support of Catherine of Aragon and opposition to Anne has so often been construed as

showing his opposition to Lutheranism and the English Reformation. But he had been commissioned to attempt to reconcile Catherine and Henry, and to restore Catherine to her rightful place on the throne of England. He could hardly have been a supporter of Anne, whatever her religious leanings.

Chapuys also offers us an insight into Anne's fate, caused by the machinations of Henry and his chief minister, Thomas Cromwell. Chapuys and Cromwell had an intense, complex relationship, a mixture of rivalry and mutual admiration, yet Chapuys could not shake from his mind how Cromwell

had engineered Anne's downfall.

Crucially, Chapuys addressed the charge which has long stained Anne's reputation and that of her brother: the accusation of incest. He refused to believe a word of it, reporting that. "No proof of his guilt was produced except that of his having once passed many hours in her company, and other little follies."

Whatever he felt about Anne's treatment of Catherine, Chapuys believed that her execution was unconscionable. For him, she was innocent of the charges.

Chapuys could not shake from his mind how instrumental Thomas Cromwell had been in engineering Anne's downfall

Though lacking Anne Boleyn's legendary sensuality, Jane possessed an easy grace and innocence

Jane Seymour in c1536. Her skills as a mediator served her well in Henry's court

3 Jane Seymour

A master of managing the king – without him realising it

Jane Seymour was a more complex figure than many nowadays believe. Popular perceptions range from either a simple, soft spoken and docile woman of whom Henry would eventually have tired, or a shrewd and calculating young woman who seized the chance to snare a monarch. But Chapuys recognised her skill in managing Henry without him realising it – the perfect wife.

Chapuys' first impressions of Jane were of a woman "of middle stature and no great beauty, so fair that one would call her rather pale than otherwise. She is over 25 years

old... not a woman of great wit, but she may have good understanding."

Chapuys' observations suggest that, while not necessarily of great intellect, Jane may have been more astute than she appeared. Though lacking Anne Boleyn's legendary sensuality, she possessed an easy grace and innocence.

Chapuys keenly appreciated the mutual affection and loyalty that developed between Jane and Mary, the only surviving child of Henry's marriage with Catherine of Aragon. Jane was sincere in her desire to restore Mary's position at court.

From Chapuys' few accounts of Jane, we encounter a quiet, determined woman who could entreat Henry for the lives of Catholic rebels as well as fight to reunite her step-daughter Mary with her father. From his first audience with Jane, Chapuys' admiration is evident; a queen he could revere.

"I ended by begging her to take care of the princess's affairs; which she kindly promised to do, saying that she would work in earnest to deserve the honorable name which I had given her of pacificator, that is, 'preserver and guardian of peace'."

4 Anne of Cleves

Not so dim, ugly and socially inept as Henry would have us believe

Chapuis was away in Belgium for the first six months of 1540 and so missed Henry's disastrous and brief marriage to Anne of Cleves. Our glimpses of her during this time are few and limited to Henry's damning observations: dim, ugly and socially inept.

Thankfully, the real Anne becomes more illuminated through Chapuis' constant stream of dispatches following her divorce from Henry. Anne was reported to be a statuesque, slender woman "of middling beauty, with determined and resolute countenance".

It was during Christmas 1541 that Chapuis first set eyes on Anne. He wrote that she made a supremely dignified entrance at Hampton Court, Henry's palace on the banks of the river Thames, where she met her successor as queen, Catherine Howard. "Having entered the room, Lady Anne approached the queen with as much reverence and punctilious ceremony as if she herself were the most insignificant damsel about court."

Chapuis was well aware of Anne's inclinations for religious reform but, on a personal level, his reports are generous in their admiration – and he was pleased to see the genuine warmth between her and Henry's daughter Mary.

Anne was a true survivor. She would outlive Henry and go on to experience life under the reign of her stepdaughter Mary.



Henry's assessment of Anne, shown in a Hans Holbein the Younger portrait, may not have been strictly accurate



Lord chancellor Thomas Cromwell successfully negotiated the marriage of Henry and Anne, but the disastrous pairing led to Cromwell's downfall and execution

Chapuis' reports of Anne are generous. He was pleased to see the warmth between her and her stepdaughter Mary

5 Catherine Howard

All she wanted to do was please those around her – but, in one critical respect, she failed

Popular culture has left us an image of Anne's successor, Catherine Howard, as a pretty, vapid, ineffectual young woman whose allegedly unbridled sexuality would be her undoing. Chapuys, however, saw her vulnerability and the precarious position into which she was forced. He shifts the focus away from that famous sexuality to more significant aspects of her

nature, namely her relationship with Henry, the firm hold her relatives had on her, and her rather endearingly earnest desire to please those around her.

Often dismissed as a queen with little power or political sway, she is viewed as more of a trophy wife admired by her considerably older husband. But this is not the Catherine of Chapuys' letters. He perceived that Henry's intention was to mould Catherine into the ideal Tudor queen, something that had eluded him for a number of years.

From her inauguration festivities, Chapuys keenly observed her role:

"[She] took occasion and courage to beg and entreat the king for the release of Maistre Huyet [Thomas Wyatt] a prisoner in the said Tower, which petition the king granted."

Catherine won the hearts of her subjects,

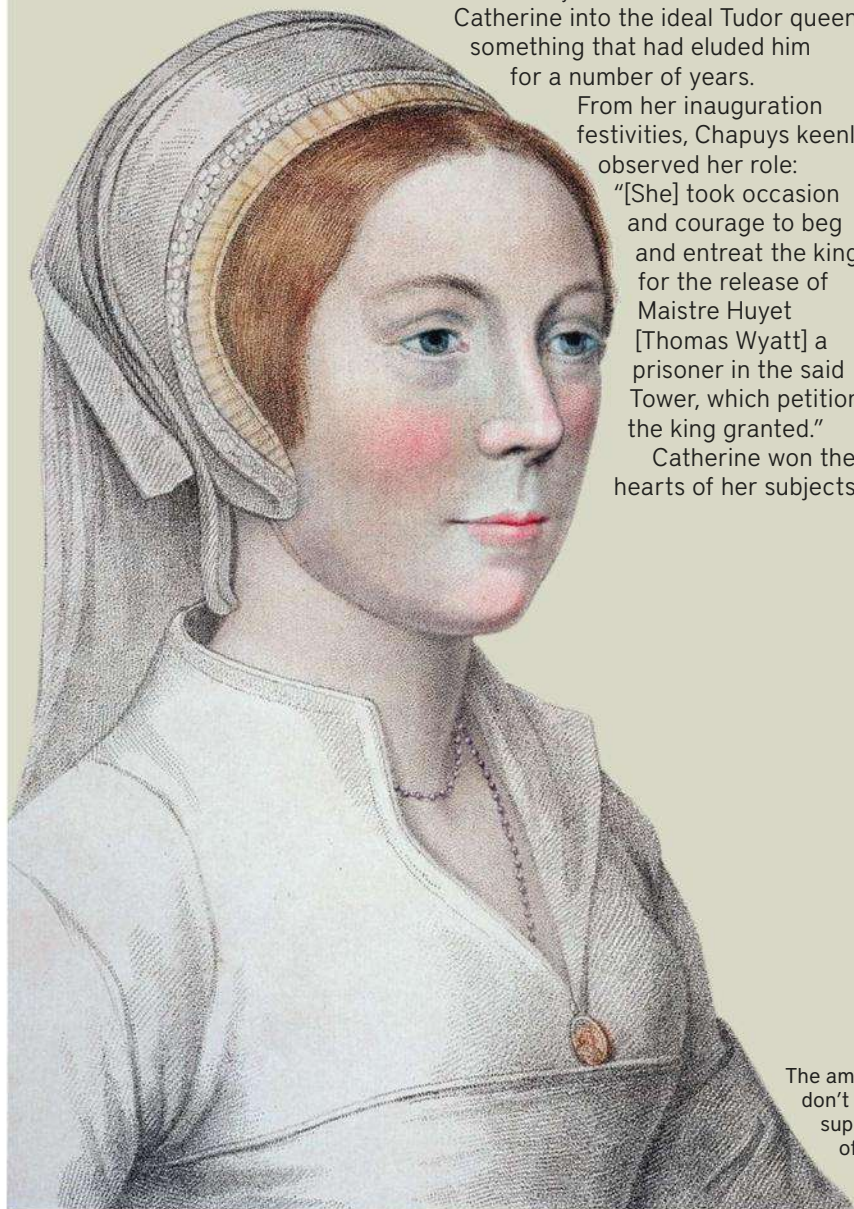
her predecessor and, to an extent, Chapuys himself, but he regretted that she and Mary had a fractious relationship. This was hardly surprising, as Mary was around five years older than her new stepmother.

Within two years, Catherine would be executed for adultery with both Francis Dereham, with whom she was involved before her marriage to Henry, and Thomas Culpepper, although there is no evidence that the affair went beyond words. Catherine's last weeks are meticulously recorded by Chapuys, including a peculiar request that the executioner's block be sent to her room.

"In the same evening she asked to see the block, pretending that she wanted to know how she was to place her head on it. This was granted, and the block being brought in, she herself tried and placed her head on it by way of experiment."

Even in death, Catherine had not wanted to disappoint.

Chapuys believed Henry's intention was to mould Catherine Howard into the ideal Tudor queen



The ambassador's letters don't necessarily support the perception of Catherine holding little political sway

6 Katherine Parr

A shrewd political operator and a calming foil for Henry's rages

By the time Henry married his sixth and final wife, Katherine Parr, Chapuys and the rest of Europe were almost indifferent to his penchant for weddings. But, by then, Chapuys was beginning to feel his age. He worried constantly that Mary would have no one to promote her claim to the Tudor throne after he was gone. He could not have been more relieved then, upon meeting Katherine Parr for the first time, to find her a graceful role model for Mary – and a calming foil for Henry's increasingly bad temper. She was also a firm supporter of Mary's rehabilitation at court; it seemed that she was to pick up where Jane Seymour had left off.

Katherine also displayed a certain political acumen, which was evident in her efforts to maintain good relations with the Holy Roman emperor (still Charles V). Chapuys trusted that Katherine would do all she could to preserve this alliance.

From his first real audience with Katherine, the ambassador observed Mary and her new stepmother together. He was gratified to see a genuine affection between the two women and thanked Katherine for the "good offices which she had always exercised towards the preservation of friendship between your majesty and the king; and also thanked her for the favour she showed to the Lady Mary".

One of Chapuys' last dispatches brings to life their touching farewell audience. Despite his crippling gout, he was determined to show Katherine and Mary his respect and devotion, and remained standing despite the severe pain he was in. Katherine could see his discomfort and anxiously insisted that he be seated.

She was one of the few at Henry's court who acknowledged Chapuys' great service to England. Clearly flattered, the ambassador was able to finally leave England feeling that he had discharged his mission entrusted to him by Catherine of Aragon all those years ago. ■

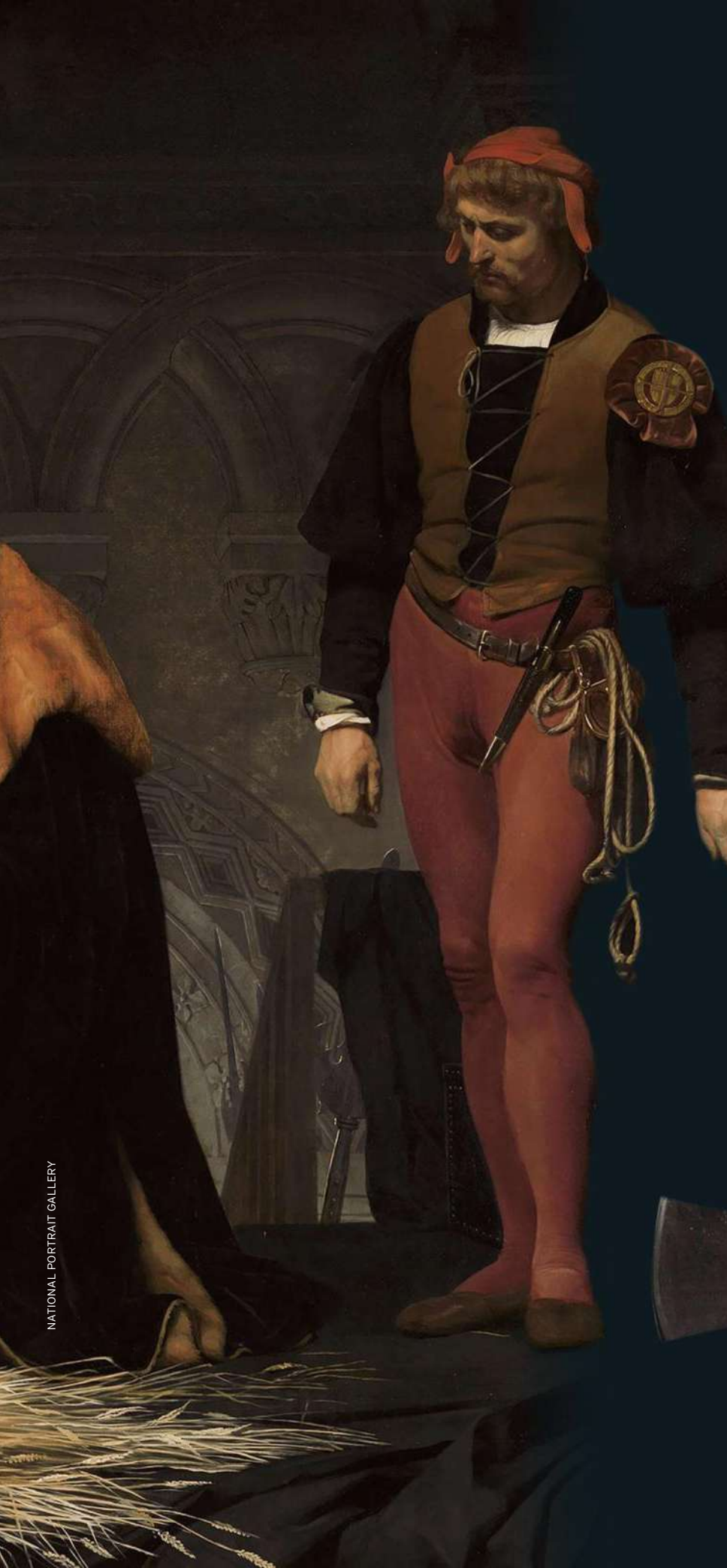
Katherine was a firm supporter of Mary's return to Henry's court, which greatly pleased Chapuys

Katherine was one of the few to recognise Chapuys' contribution to the English court over 15 years



FAKING JANE





Lady Jane Grey ruled for nine days in 1553 before Mary I grabbed the throne. But, asks **LEANDA DE LISLE**, was the teenager really the innocent stooge that fictional depictions have led us to believe?

FALSE IDOL?

The Execution of Lady Jane Grey (1833) by French Romantic painter Paul Delaroche did much to crystallise the Victorian perception of the nine-day queen



The teenage queen, Lady Jane Grey, has been mythologised, even fetishised, as the innocent victim of adult ambition. The legend was encapsulated by the French Romantic artist Paul Delaroche in his 1833 historical portrait of Jane

in white on the scaffold (see previous page), an image with all the erotic overtones of a virgin sacrifice. But the legend also inspired a fraud, one that has fooled historians, art experts and biographers for more than 100 years.

A 16th-century merchant gave us what was believed, until now, to be the only detailed, contemporary description of Jane's appearance. In a letter, he wrote an eyewitness account of a smiling, red-haired girl, being processed to the Tower of London as queen, on 10 July 1553. He was close enough to see that she was so small she had to wear stacked shoes, or 'chopines', to give her height. Jane was overthrown nine days later and, eventually, executed in the Tower from where she had reigned. But while the tragedy of her brutal death, at only 16, is real, the letter is an invention that obscures the significance of her reign.

The faked letter first made its appearance in Richard Patrick Boyle Davey's 1909 biography *The Nine Days Queen, Lady Jane Grey & her Times*. Davey's subject was already a popular one. The Victorians had lapped up the poignant tale of a child-woman forced to be queen and later executed as a usurper. The letter, 'discovered' by Davey in the archives of Genoa, seemingly brought this tragic heroine to life. But, in retrospect, that should have sent alarm bells ringing, for the Jane the Victorians knew was already heavily fictionalised.

The historical Jane was a great-grandchild of Henry VII. Highly intelligent and given a top-flight Protestant education, she might have made a queen consort to her fiercely Protestant cousin Edward VI, as her father hoped. But instead, on 6 July 1553, the dying Edward bequeathed her the throne, in place of his Catholic half-sister, Mary Tudor. Mary overthrew Jane 13 days later and she was duly tried for treason, found guilty and condemned.



DRESS LIKE A QUEEN The later fascination for the Lady Jane Grey legend extended to Victorians dressing up as her for parties, as shown by this painting from 1884

Mary indicated that she wished to pardon Jane. But, nevertheless, Jane was executed the following year. It was the aftermath to a rebellion in which she had played no part (although her father, the Duke of Suffolk, had). Why then did Mary sign Jane's death warrant? The day before Jane's beheading, the bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, reminded Mary it was leading Protestants who had opposed her rule both in July 1553 and in the recent rebellion. Jane, who had condemned Catholicism as queen, continued to do so as a prisoner in the Tower. As such, she posed a threat. It was for her religious stance that she died, not solely for her father's actions, or her reign as a usurper.

ALAMY

Jane's legend was encapsulated in Paul Delaroche's 1833 painting which depicted her on the execution scaffold with all the erotic overtones of a virgin sacrifice

Aware that the Protestant cause would be damaged by its link to treason, Jane reminded people from the execution scaffold that while in law she was a traitor, she had merely accepted the throne she was offered and was innocent of having sought it. From this kernel of truth, the later image of Jane was spun. Protestant propagandists developed her claims to innocence, ascribing the events of 1553 to the personal ambitions of Jane's father and father-in-law, rather than religion. Under Queen Elizabeth I, treason was associated with Catholics, not Protestants, and the earlier history was forgotten.

The religious issue of 1553 concluded only in 1701, when it was made illegal for any Catholic to inherit the throne: a law that still stands. But Jane's story continued to develop. Her 'innocence' was associated increasingly with the passivity deemed appropriate in a young girl. The sexual dimension to this is evident in Edward's Young's 1714 poem, *The Force of Religion*, which invited men to gaze as voyeurs on the pure Jane in her 'private closet'. Jane's mother, Frances, meanwhile, was reinvented as a wicked queen to Jane's Snow White.

By the 19th century, Jane's fictionalised life was enormously popular. But there was something still missing from her story: a face. With no contemporary images or descriptions, the public had to be content with Jane as imagined by artists. The most striking work remains Paul Delaroche's portrait, *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey*, bequeathed to the British nation by Lord Cheylesmore in 1902. Jane – blindfolded and feeling for the execution block – represents an apotheosis of female helplessness. Richard Davey seems to have spotted a need for an account of Jane's appearance that matches its power. He claimed to have found it in a letter in Genoa, composed by the merchant, 'Sir Baptist Spinola'.

The letter has been quoted in biographies ever since and used to argue the merits of 'lost' portraits of Jane. But, as a historian, I was concerned that Davey was the sole source for this letter. When researching my triple

biography, *The Sisters Who Would Be Queen*, I discovered that Davey had actually invented evidence that Jane had a nanny and dresser with her in the Tower: these were characters inspired by earlier novels. So began a long search for the 'Spinola' letter, but it was never found in Genoa or in any history predating 1909. It became clear that the letter was a fake that mixed details from contemporary sources with fiction.

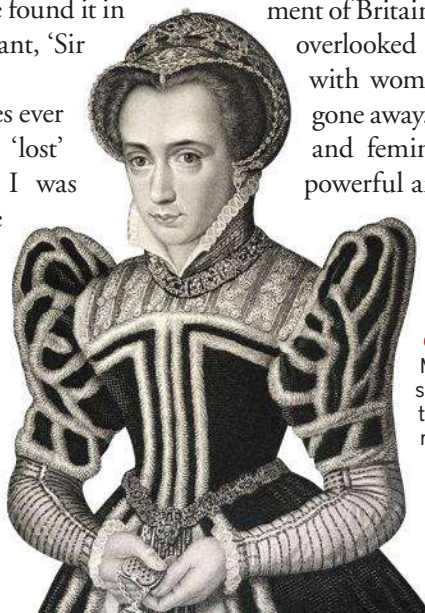
There was a contemporary merchant called Benedict Spinola and a soldier called Baptista Spinola. The description of Jane has echoes of the red-lipped girl in the Delaroche portrait, but resembles also a contemporary description of Mary Tudor, who was "of low stature... very thin; and her hair reddish". Jane's mother carries her train in the letter, as was observed in 1553. The platform shoes, or 'chopines', were taken from the Victorian historian Agnes Strickland, quoting the noted man of letters Isaac D'Israeli. No earlier source can be found. But they are suggestive of Jane's physical vulnerability: an element in the appeal of the abused child woman that remains so popular (we even find Jane raped in a recent novel).

The rest of Jane's dress, described by Spinola as a gown of green velvet worn with a white headdress, was in colours traditionally worn by a monarch on the eve of their coronation. But they are also the colours of the illustration, *Lady Jane Grey in Royal Robes*, published in Arden Holt's 1882 *Fancy Dresses Described*. Significantly, in Davey's *The Tower of London*, published in 1910, he describes Jane's dress as edged in ermine, as it was in Holt's illustration: a detail overlooked by 'Sir Baptist Spinola'.

Davey's lies and the repetition of old myths are damaging. Because Jane's reign was treated for so long as the product of the ambitions of a few men, or of Edward VI's naïve hopes, it is regarded as a brief hiatus, of no consequence. But it is key to understanding the development of Britain's constitutional history. And we have overlooked something else. The Tudor unease with women who hold power has never really gone away. In legend, Jane is the good girl: weak and feminine. Her mother is a bad woman: powerful and mannish. This is the lesson of the myths – one that historians have all too willingly accepted. ■

CONTRARY MARY

Mary I (pictured) suggested she might pardon Jane, but the deposed queen was nonetheless executed the year after her short reign





Elizabeth

CROMWELL'S SHADOWY QUEEN

SIMON GUERRIER investigates the mysterious life of Elizabeth Cromwell – the ordinary woman who became England's first lady in the 17th century

On 14 April 1654, five years after the execution of King Charles I and the abolition of the monarchy, the new lord protector, Oliver Cromwell, moved into apartments in Whitehall Palace in London. But his wife, Elizabeth, haunted by the ghosts of dead princes, could never be left alone in her new home.

At least, that's the story in *The Court and Kitchen of Elizabeth Cromwell*, a satirical cookbook – yes, really – first published in 1664. The pamphlet is propaganda from those who had favoured the restoration of the monarchy (which occurred four years previously with Charles II). It accuses the former lady protectress of meanness and greed, and was written from “contemptuous indignation that such a person durst presume to take

upon herself such a sovereign estate when she was a hundred times fitter for a barn than a palace”. It recoils at the idea that, in the 1650s, England's most powerful woman was not an aristocrat but an ordinary housewife.

Elizabeth's life and times were extraordinary. Yet, unlike almost anyone else who ever married a British head of state, she has never been granted a major biography. Just a handful of academic papers



REGAL POSE

Robert Walker's portrait of Elizabeth Cromwell from around 1653 shows a lavishly dressed woman, far removed from the dour puritanism associated with her husband

OPPOSITE PAGE:

Elizabeth's husband, Oliver Cromwell, became the most powerful man in Britain after the overthrow of the monarchy in 1649





PLEA FOR CLEMENCY

The Cromwell family, including Elizabeth (far right), implores Oliver to spare Charles I's life in this 19th-century painting. But did this scene actually happen?

mention her. That's largely because so little evidence of her life survives.

We know she was born some time in 1598, perhaps the oldest of 12 children of the merchant James Bourchier. James was knighted in 1603 and owned property in the county of Essex and in London. Yet the next we know of Elizabeth is her wedding day: 22 August 1620.

Between 1621 and 1638, Elizabeth and Oliver had nine children and lived in various locations in Cambridgeshire. Their home in the small cathedral city of Ely is now a museum, where that satirical cookbook was a key source in the

re-creation of Elizabeth's kitchen. We can follow Oliver's path from relative obscurity as MP for Huntingdon to general of parliament's New Model Army during the Civil War, but all we really know of Elizabeth's life at the time is that he sent her some of his pay.

What did she think of the war with King Charles I and of her husband's part in defeating him? A 19th-century painting by William Fisk (above) shows Elizabeth and her children pleading with Oliver to spare Charles's life – but there's no evidence of such an episode. Did she really believe that ghosts of dead princes haunted her? We simply don't know.

We do have a sense of Elizabeth's relationship with Oliver. Three letters from him to her survive from the year after the king's execution. While at war in Scotland in 1650–51, Oliver wrote to Elizabeth: "Thou art dearer to me than any creature." In another, he says: "Although I have not much to write, yet indeed I love to write to my dear, who is very much in my heart."

A letter from Elizabeth to Oliver dated 27 December 1650 is a rare surviving record of her voice. She complains that she has written three letters for every one received from him. "Truly, my life is but half a life in your absence," she says, "did not the Lord make it up in himself."

The letter reveals more than her love for Oliver (and God, reminding us of the Cromwells' puritanical faith). She also tells Oliver to write to the lord chief justice, the president of the Council of State and the speaker of the House of Commons. "You cannot think the wrong you do

Unlike everyone else married to a head of state, so little evidence of Elizabeth's life survives

yourself,” she concludes, “in the want of a letter, though it were but seldom.” It’s tempting to read a lot into this one surviving letter. Is it evidence that Elizabeth guided, perhaps even masterminded, her husband’s political career? How much did she help him reach the highest office in the land? Again, we just don’t know.

But what we do know about Elizabeth can shed light on how the Puritan regime might have differed to that of the late king – or not. We tend to think of the Puritans as dour and earnest, opposing all comfort and pleasure. However, a portrait of Elizabeth from about 1653 (see page 83), painted by Robert Walker, indicates something very different. In the painting, Elizabeth gazes confidently down at us, resplendent in a dress of black velvet and bright orange lining. She wears pearl earrings and necklace, her hair is in glossy ringlets and she seems to be wearing make-up. In short, Elizabeth – this first housewife among equals – looks rather like a queen.

We know the Cromwells adopted the royal palaces of Whitehall and Hampton Court as their homes, where Elizabeth helped entertain the wives of foreign dignitaries. But, unlike her husband, her role was not defined in the written constitution. The part she played at state occasions seems to have been strictly limited. This could have been a conscious decision to be different from the Stuart monarchy and to not use the Cromwell family as a symbol of state power. If so, our lack of knowledge about Elizabeth appears to be because her life went unrecorded, a kind of political statement by her husband’s regime.

We don’t know how the death of Oliver in 1658 affected Elizabeth. We know the Protectorate offered her £20,000 and the use of St James’s House, but we don’t know if she attended Oliver’s state funeral or how involved she was in her son Richard’s subsequent short reign as lord protector. While it refused to follow Richard, the army proposed that Elizabeth receive a generous pension.

We can only imagine Elizabeth’s feelings when, soon after this, parliament restored the monarchy. Her late husband’s corpse was exhumed from Westminster Abbey to be ‘executed’ for treason. By the time Oliver’s head was displayed on a pole at Westminster Hall, Elizabeth had been evicted.

Her son Richard fled the country in fear of his life, but was Elizabeth ever in danger? A telling source is her petition to Charles II in 1660, denying the rumours that she’d stolen jewels and other items belonging to the royal family. She speaks of “many violences and losses under pretence of searching for such goods”, insists that she played no part in her late husband’s regime and assures the new king of her obedience.

Charles must have believed her – perhaps her low profile in the Protectorate even saved her life. She was allowed to retire to the countryside, but Elizabeth’s health was failing; her daughter Mary described her mother’s sickness as “so affecting a spectacle as I scarce know how to write”. She died in 1665.

A commoner becoming queen is a fairy tale, yet Elizabeth’s life was anything but. It’s frustrating that we don’t know more about such a key figure in this extraordinary period. But perhaps that’s why the rare glimpses we do have of her remain so haunting. ■

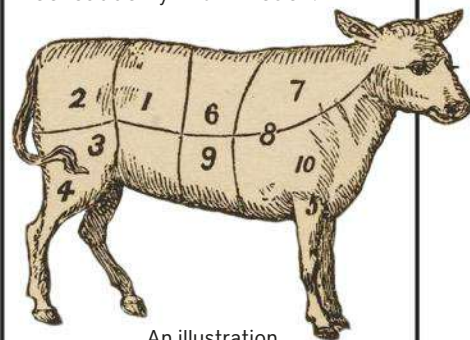
Music and meat: the life of the wife

ELIZABETH CROMWELL LEFT US JUST A FEW HINTS OF HER LIFE, AS **SIMON GUERRIER** FOUND OUT WHEN WORKING ON A BBC RADIO DOCUMENTARY

In producing a documentary about Elizabeth Cromwell for BBC Radio 3, the challenge was how to use what few glimpses we do have of her to bring her to life. We knew how many children she had and that she attended particular court events, but we needed something more vivid.

As well as retracing Elizabeth’s steps – the church where she was married, the house where she died – we looked for anything to give us a feel for Elizabeth the person. That’s why the satirical cookbook produced by her post-Restoration tormenters is so important: while mocking her, it also lists what she ate, including her “almost constant dish” of Scotch collops of veal. Here was a tantalising sense of a real person.

Historian Patrick Little pointed us to sources describing the music that might have played in Cromwell’s court. He helped us track down modern recordings of works by John Hingeston and Giacomo Carissimi, which we included in the documentary. That’s the benefit of radio: what you hear conjures pictures in your head. And when that music plays, Elizabeth and her world feel suddenly within reach.



An illustration showing the different cuts of veal, a favourite dish of Elizabeth Cromwell



ROYAL MISTRESSES

From passionate paramours to affairs of convenience, with illegitimate children along the way, **TRACY BORMAN** takes a look at some notable royal affairs through the ages

1 **Rosamund Clifford** (before 1140–c1176) Mistress of **Henry II**

This famous beauty, a fair rose, allegedly met her death at the hands of a jealous wife

'Fair Rosamund' was the mistress – and, according to some – the 'true love' of Henry II. She was the daughter of Walter de Clifford, a lord of the Welsh Marches. A great beauty, her name may have been a derivative of the Latin 'rosa mundi' or 'rose of the world'.

How Rosamund came to the notice of King Henry II is not recorded, but he publicly acknowledged her as his mistress in 1174. By that time, Henry had been married to the formidable Eleanor of Aquitaine for 22 years and she had borne him eight children. But their relationship had always been tempestuous

and in 1173 Henry had his wife imprisoned for supporting their sons' revolt against him. She would remain his prisoner for the next 16 years.

It was during that time that Henry's relationship with Rosamund Clifford blossomed. According to tradition, in order to conceal it from Queen Eleanor, he had a complex

"Rose passing sweet
erewhile, now nought
but odour vile"

maze built at his palace at Woodstock, where he would meet his mistress in secret. Legend has it that Henry's jealous queen stole into the labyrinth and confronted her rival, forcing her to choose between the dagger and poison. Rosamund chose the latter and died. Quite how Eleanor had managed to escape prison in order to slay her husband's mistress is not explained.

Rosamund died just two years after Henry had acknowledged the affair. The king helped to pay for a lavish tomb at Godstow Abbey, together with an endowment to ensure that the nuns would care for

2 Bessie Blount

(c1500–39/40) Mistress of Henry VIII

The king's lover gave him a precious son

Bessie Blount was a renowned beauty. The daughter of a loyal servant to the royal family, she came to court as a maid of honour to Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and first caught the king's eye in 1514 or 1515. Although he has a reputation as a lady's man, Henry did not have as many affairs as one might expect for a man who was married six times. Most of his mistresses were short-lived and unacknowledged. Bessie was an exception. Henry was very fond of her and their affair lasted for about eight years.

Apart from her longevity as a mistress, what set Bessie apart from Henry's other women – and, indeed, his wife – was the fact that on 15 June 1519, she bore him a son. The timing could not have been better, for everyone except

Catherine. The queen had recently miscarried again and her husband was becoming increasingly anxious that she would fail to give him the male heir he so desperately needed. Now that Bessie had borne him a lusty boy, Henry took it as proof that the problem lay not with him but with his wife. It was a conviction that would have far-reaching consequences in the years to come.

Far from concealing the birth, Henry openly celebrated it, eager for the world to see that he could father a son. The child was named Henry FitzRoy and created Duke of Richmond and Somerset and Earl of Nottingham. As such, he was one of the highest ranking nobles in the land: there was talk of making him heir, despite his illegitimacy.

Her son's birth was the zenith of Bessie's affair with Henry, but it was



Henry VIII with his royal bastard Henry Fitzroy, whom he fathered with his beloved mistress Bessie Blount in 1519

also its end. The king subsequently took Mary Boleyn as his mistress. Bessie was married off to Gilbert Tailboys in 1522 and was little mentioned at court thereafter. Her highly prized son died in 1536, aged 17, by which time the king was already onto his third wife.



In the 12th century a jealous Queen Eleanor allegedly confronted the rival for her husband Henry II's affections and forced her to drink poison

it. The tomb became a popular shrine until two years after Henry's own death in 1191, when Hugh, bishop of Lincoln, paid a visit and saw that it was bedecked with flowers and candles. Disgusted, he ordered that Rosamund's remains be reburied outside the abbey. Her new tomb bore the inscription: "This tomb doth here enclose the world's most beauteous Rose, / Rose passing sweet erewhile, now nought but odour vile."

The 17th-century antiquarian Thomas Allen claimed that before its destruction Eleanor's tomb had contained "the picture of the cup out of which she drank the poison, given her by the queen, carved in stone". His account was discredited less than a century later as "no more than a fiction of the vulgar". Modern historians are no closer to discovering the truth of Fair Rosamund's death.

3 Barbara Villiers

(1640–1709) Mistress of **Charles II**

This foul-tempered voluptuary was the “curse of the nation”

Born in 1640, Barbara Villiers was the most notorious of Charles II's many mistresses. Tall, voluptuous, with long brunette tresses and a sensuous mouth, her looks compensated for her family's meagre fortune. At 19 she married the well connected Roger Palmer – against his family's wishes. A year later, she became mistress of Charles II. As a reward, the king made her husband 1st Earl of Castlemaine, and Barbara became known as Lady Castlemaine. Many titles and riches followed as a result of their affair.

By 1662, Barbara had more influence at the court than Charles's queen consort, Catherine of Braganza. She was quick to

flaunt the fact – never more blatantly than when choosing to give birth to her second of five children by Charles at Hampton Court while he and the queen were honeymooning there. Shortly afterwards, she was appointed Lady of the Bedchamber, despite the protests of the new queen. The two women feuded constantly during the years that followed.

Perhaps more than any other mistress, Barbara was quick to exploit the influence that her position offered. She helped herself to money from the Privy Purse and meddled in politics, bringing her up against some of the most powerful men in government. Extravagant, promiscuous and foul-tempered, she was described by



diarist John Evelyn as the “curse of the nation”.

The king finally cast her aside in 1672, having found a new favourite. But Barbara courted scandal for the rest of her days, taking unsuitable lovers, bearing more children and marrying again aged 64, four years before her death.

4 Henrietta Howard

(1689–1767) Mistress of **George II**

One of the longest affairs in royal history ran like clockwork

Henrietta was born into a noble family in 1689, but at 17 made a disastrous marriage to Charles Howard, son of the Earl of Suffolk. His drunkenness, whoring and gambling plunged his wife into poverty. In 1714 she rescued their fortunes by going to Hanover, in Germany, to ingratiate herself with the future royal family. Following the accession of George I to the British throne, the first monarch of the House of Hanover, Mrs Howard returned to London with the royal party. She became woman of the bedchamber to Caroline, Princess of Wales.

She soon became a star of the court. Renowned for her intellect, she was friends with some of the greatest literary figures of the age. None of this impressed Caroline's husband, George, Prince of Wales, who said he hated “boets and bainters both”. But he took Mrs Howard as his mistress in around 1718.

It was an affair not of passion but of convenience. He was passionately in love with his wife, but believed a mistress a “necessary appurtenance to his grandeur as a prince”.

The affair was conducted with clockwork regularity.

He visited at exactly the

same time every night. The affair lasted almost 20 years, long after he became king in 1727 – one of the longest in royal history.

Henrietta became increasingly desperate to escape her life at court, though, and when she was embroiled in a political scandal in 1734, this gave her the opportunity. She had taken a sojourn in the spa town of Bath, and while there had made sure she was seen in company with Lord Bolingbroke, an enemy of the king. As she intended, news of this had already reached the court by the time she returned and her royal lover refused to even speak to her.

She retired to Marble Hill, the beautiful house she had had built by the river Thames in Twickenham. Free at last from her arduous affair with the king and her odious first husband, who had died in 1733, Henrietta married (for love) the amiable and accomplished George Berkeley. They established their home as such a glittering social centre that it even rivalled the court itself.



5 Lillie Langtry

(1853–1929) Mistress of 'Bertie,' Prince of Wales

She bedded two princes then went on to become a successful businesswoman

Born Emilie Charlotte Le Breton, Lillie's spirited nature was obvious from an early age: her French governess could not control her, so she was assigned to her brothers' tutor and as a result received a far better education than most women of the time.

Lillie grew into an exquisitely beautiful and socially ambitious young woman, and in 1874 married Edward Langtry, son of a Belfast shipowner. They moved to London and Lillie was celebrated as a 'professional beauty' – widely photographed and in demand.

She came to the attention of the capital's most notorious philanderer: Albert Edward – 'Bertie' – Prince of Wales (later Edward VII). He arranged to sit next to her at a dinner party in 1877 and was soon infatuated. She became his mistress later that year.

During the three years of their affair, Lillie enjoyed dazzling social success. The leading artists of the day clamoured to take her portrait – most notably John Everett Millais. Her royal lover lavished expensive gifts, even houses, upon her. He once complained: "I've spent enough on you to build a battleship," whereupon she allegedly replied: "And you've spent enough in me to float one."

The affair ended when Bertie switched his attentions to the French actress Sarah Bernhardt. But Lillie was resourceful and soon moved on to a new royal beau, Prince Louis of Battenburg. In March 1881 she gave birth to his daughter, sparking the breakup of her marriage to Edward Langtry, who was now bankrupt. Shortly afterwards, she embarked upon a career on the stage.

Her notoriety as the Prince of Wales's former mistress ensured that each performance was packed, and Lillie soon founded her own company. She later became a highly successful racehorse owner and was a rich woman by the time of her death in 1929. ■

Her royal lover lavished expensive gifts, even houses, upon her. He once complained: "I've spent enough on you to build a battleship"

Lillie Langtry had a successful career on the stage and founded her own company, becoming a rich woman



MARRIED TO A PRINCE

THE OUTSIDERS WHO BECAME ROYAL BRIDES

✚ **WALLIS SIMPSON**, the American who caused the king to abdicate

✚ At first shy and demure, **DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES** later became an outspoken figure

✚ **KATE MIDDLETON**, the 'commoner' who charmed a nation



GETTY

**DIANA, PRINCESS
OF WALES**

Her 1981 marriage to Prince Charles ended in divorce in 1996. She died one year and three days later at the age of 36



The Vilification *of* Wallis *Simpson*

In 1936, King Edward VIII shocked the world by favouring abdication over renouncing his love for an American divorcee. **SUSAN WILLIAMS** investigates how the woman for whom he gave up the throne was savaged by society

GETTY IMAGES



SOCIETY SCHEMER?

Wallis Simpson in 1931, the year she first met the future Edward VIII. The pair allegedly began an affair three years later

OPPOSITE PAGE:

Wallis and Edward on their return to Britain from France after the outbreak of the Second World War



In the summer of 1936, the glamorous socialite Lady Diana Cooper remarked that “Wallis is wearing very very badly. Her commonness and Becky Sharpishness irritate.” As far as the English upper classes were concerned, Wallis Simpson was a cunning social climber, like Becky Sharp in William Thackeray’s novel *Vanity Fair*. They simply could not understand what King Edward VIII saw in her – a woman considered too lower class to qualify for any kind of royal attention, aside from being a divorcee – and an American.

But Edward adored her. He had met her in 1931, when he was Prince of Wales and she was married to her second husband, Ernest Simpson. It was not long before they were in love. “My own beloved Wallis,” he wrote in 1935, “I love you more & more & more & more... I haven’t seen you once today & I can’t take it. I love you.”

Edward’s friend, the future prime minister Winston Churchill, believed that Wallis was good for him. “Although branded with the stigma of a guilty love,” he observed, “no companionship could have appeared more natural, more free from impropriety or grossness.” Well-read, with a lively sense of humor, Wallis had a warm and sincere heart. She was devoted to her mother and her aunt, and she did not conceal – even in circles where paid work was thought to be vulgar – the fact that her aunt worked for a living. Her servants liked her as well. “All the maids,” said a kitchen maid, “spoke well of Mrs Simpson.”

By January 1936, when Edward became king, he had decided to marry Wallis. It was said in court circles that Wallis was scheming to be queen. But this was not true: rather, she wondered if it might be better to “be content with the simple way”, where she would be his mistress, rather than his wife. But Edward swept aside her misgivings and persuaded her to start proceedings to divorce her second husband, Ernest Simpson. In November 1936, when she had obtained her decree nisi, Edward announced his marriage plan to the prime minister, Stanley Baldwin.

Under the Royal Marriages Act of 1772, Edward was free to marry anyone he so wished as sovereign – except a

Roman Catholic. But Baldwin said it was impossible: public opinion would not approve of a divorced woman becoming queen. Churchill and the press barons Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rothermere came up with a solution – a morganatic marriage, by which Wallis would become Edward’s wife but not his queen. It became known as the ‘Cornwall plan’, because Churchill suggested that Wallis could be styled the Duchess of Cornwall.

Until the start of December 1936, only the tiny world of upper-class society knew about Edward’s love for Wallis, because it had been kept out of the news. But, on 2 December 1936, the story broke. The nation was stunned: the streets were packed and newspapers sold as fast as they were printed. “Papers full of harpy & the king,” wrote the prime minister’s wife in her diary.

The establishment, led by Baldwin, the Church of England, the press and the royal court, had expected the nation to oppose Edward’s plan for marriage. But, to their horror, most people wanted to keep him as their king on any terms. He was immensely popular and was appreciated for his concern for ordinary people, with whom he had served at the front in the years of war, and for his many visits to the poor. When he had visited the impoverished region of south Wales and declared that “something must be done” to find work for the jobless, his concern was seen to highlight the government’s neglect of the unemployed. Furthermore, in such an economic climate, many people also liked the idea that Wallis, like them, was not rich and privileged.

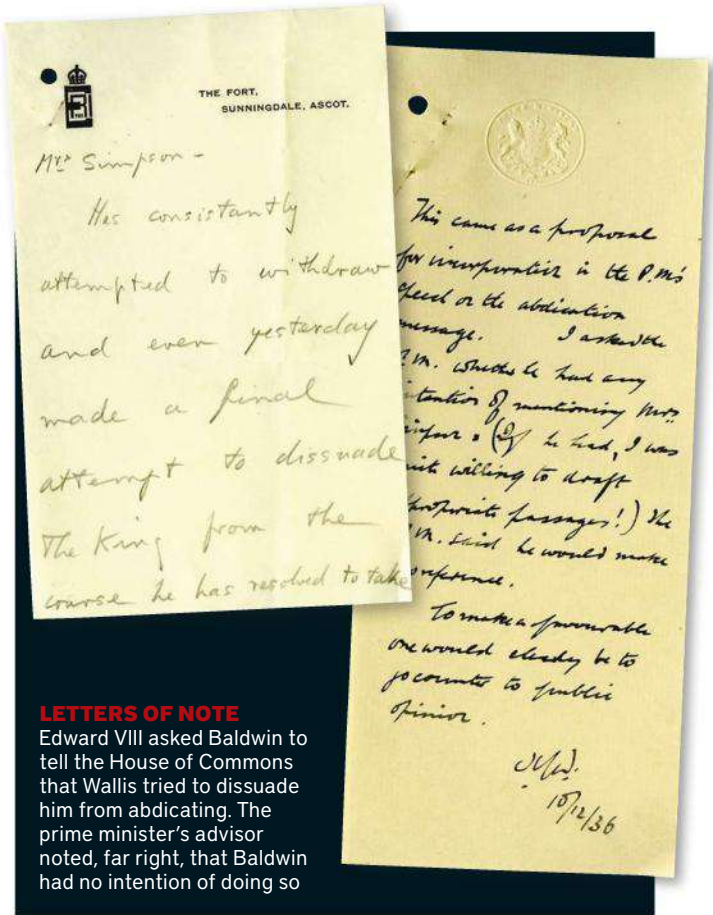
The country was divided. On the one side, there was the establishment. On the other, there was the mass of ordinary people, as well as middle-class liberals and intellectuals, like the playwright George Bernard Shaw. “The People Want Their King,” insisted a *Daily Mail* headline. Diners rose in restaurants to propose a toast to Edward while, in the cinema, the national anthem was greeted with enthusiastic clapping and shouts of “We want the King.” The

Only upper-class society knew
about Edward’s love for Wallis.
It had been kept out of the news



HAPPY COUPLE

In June 1937, exactly six months after their relationship became public knowledge, Wallis and Edward were married in a low-key ceremony in France



LETTERS OF NOTE

Edward VIII asked Baldwin to tell the House of Commons that Wallis tried to dissuade him from abdicating. The prime minister's advisor noted, far right, that Baldwin had no intention of doing so



SIGN OF THE TIMES

Protestors react to Edward's announcement that he intends to step down from the throne



OUR MAN IN NASSAU

The couple pictured in c1942 in the Bahamas, where Edward – by now titled the Duke of Windsor – served as governor

newsreels acknowledged there was a crisis, but presented it as a love story, not a scandal. In the House of Commons, MPs cheered when Churchill stood up to demand that no pressure be put on the king. Many people suspected that Baldwin wanted to get rid of Edward, making Wallis “a godsend” because she provided the perfect excuse to bounce him off the throne.

But over the weekend of 4-6 December, there was a proliferation of rumours across the nation that began to plant seeds of doubt. There was widespread speculation that Churchill was going to form a ‘King’s Party’ and bring down the government. It was also rumoured that, in the words of Baldwin’s advisor, Sir Horace Wilson, Wallis was “selfish, self-seeking, hard, calculating, ambitious, scheming, dangerous”. Most damaging for Edward, though, was a story that alleged that Wallis was a friend of Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German ambassador, and was selling the nation’s secrets. These sorts of things, observed the publisher Francis Meynell, “were bound to be said but other incidents of which I heard made one view her with much suspicion on this point”.

However, Wallis had met Ribbentrop only twice; indeed, the first occasion was a large luncheon that had also been attended by Churchill. Neither she nor Edward were part of any social circle frequented by Hitler’s ambassador. He was a favourite guest of Lord and Lady Londonderry and of the social hostess, Mrs Ronnie Greville, who admired Hitler and fascism. But Mrs Greville’s royal friends were Albert, the Duke of York, and his wife Elizabeth (the future George VI and Queen Elizabeth) – not Wallis and Edward.

On 3 December, the day after the original story broke, Wallis had fled to the south of France to stay with friends. She was a resourceful woman: she had survived an abusive first marriage and had travelled extensively through Europe and Asia. But she was also sharp enough to sense a “mounting menace in the very atmosphere” and felt close to a nervous breakdown.

Once away from England, she became aware that Edward, who had by now been told by Baldwin that a morganatic marriage was impossible, had decided to abdicate. She tried to stop him. On 7 December, she issued a statement to the press – that she was willing to renounce the king. Baldwin was unnerved: “Only time I was frightened. I thought [the king] might change his mind.” He quickly sent a telegram to the prime ministers across Britain’s dominions, stating that he had “every reason for doubting bona fides of Mrs Simpson’s statement”.

Edward stood firm in his decision to go. On 10 December, aware that Baldwin was going to make an announcement to the House of Commons, Edward sent him a note, asking him to tell the House of Mrs Simpson’s efforts to prevent him from giving up the throne. Baldwin’s advisor Horace Wilson pinned a note of his own to the one Edward had sent: “I asked the PM whether he had any intention of mentioning Mrs Simpson (If he had, [I] was quite willing to draft appropriate passages!). The PM said he would make no reference.” On 11 December, Edward gave a speech to the nation, which Churchill had helped him to write. It had become impossible for him, he said, “to discharge my duties as king as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love”. Wallis listened in France, lying on a sofa with her eyes closed. “Darling,” she wrote afterwards, “I want to see you touch you I want to run my own house I want to be married and to you.”

They were finally married on 3 June 1937 in France. But the new king, George VI, forbade any of Edward’s brothers or his sister from attending the wedding. Then

A WOMAN SCORNE

A sympathetic portrait of Wallis Simpson in *The Bystander*, April 1937. She wrote in an October 1936 letter to Edward: “I feel like an animal in a trap,” which is rather how she appears here



ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS-MARY EVANS



FAMILY TIES

Pictured a year before he took the throne, Edward (centre) is seen here with his brother – and successor – George and his nieces, the princesses Elizabeth and Margaret

he sent word that the title of HRH – Her Royal Highness – would not be extended to Wallis. She would be simply Duchess of Windsor. It was a wounding blow to Edward – and it meant that, in the end, his marriage to Wallis was morganatic. “I hope you will never regret this sacrifice,” Wallis wrote to Edward, “and that your brother will prove to the world that we still have a position and that you will be given some jobs to do.” But this was not to be. The couple made repeated requests for useful employment, but were turned down. It was feared in court circles that, as Horace Wilson told Neville Chamberlain in December 1936, Mrs Simpson intended “not only to come back here but... to set up a ‘court’ of her own and – there can be little doubt – do her best to make things uncomfortable for the new occupant of the throne. It must not be assumed that she has abandoned hope of becoming queen of England.”

“I think you know,” wrote George VI in December 1938 to Chamberlain, now prime minister, “that neither the queen [Elizabeth, mother of Queen Elizabeth II] nor Queen Mary [George’s mother] have any desire to meet the Duchess of Windsor”. As Churchill observed sadly of

the maligned Wallis, “no one has been more victimised by gossip and scandal.”

The ugly rumours lingered on, even beyond Wallis’s death in 1986. In a sense, they became worse, because the establishment’s perception of Wallis in 1936 prevailed, eclipsing the sympathetic view of ordinary people at the time. It is maintained that a China Dossier exists, listing sexual tricks learned by Wallis in Shanghai, which she had used to ensnare the king – but nothing has been found in any archive. The allegation that she was a Nazi agent is still current, even though there is no reliable evidence in either the British or the German national archives.

In 2005, Prince Charles married Camilla Parker-Bowles, a divorcee, on the very morganatic basis denied to Edward: Camilla became Duchess of Cornwall and was styled HRH. If this solution could be achieved for Charles and Camilla, then why had it not been possible for Edward and Wallis? “I am profoundly grieved at what has happened,” wrote Churchill to former prime minister David Lloyd George on Christmas Day 1936. “I believe the abdication to have been altogether premature and probably quite unnecessary.” ■

Winston Churchill observed that “no one has been more victimised by gossip and scandal”



FAMILIAR FACE

In a very short space of time, Diana became one of the most famous – and surely most photographed – people in the world

OPPOSITE PAGE:

An official portrait of Diana on her wedding day in 1981, just four weeks after her 20th birthday



Diana REBEL PRINCESS

Initially presented as the heir to the throne's dutiful, innocent bride, Diana transformed herself into an outspoken and controversial figure. **SARAH GRISTWOOD** considers a short life lived in the full glare of expectancy and speculation



THE LADY AND THE PRINCE

Charles and Diana two months before their 1981 wedding. "Here was a fairy story that everyone wanted to work," she later concluded

It's now 35 years since Prince Charles began courting Lady Diana Spencer; less than 20 since her death following a car accident in a Paris underpass. But already it feels as if – slowly, cautiously – she is beginning to pass into history. To look back to the early days of her public life is to realise how far we have come.

It was 1980 when the 32-year-old Charles encountered the 19-year-old Lady Diana Spencer, youngest daughter of Earl Spencer, at a weekend house party. They had met before, since Charles had been involved with her elder sister, Sarah, but then Diana had been a mere 16 – and now, Charles was under pressure to find a bride. His beloved mentor Lord Mountbatten, recently assassinated by the paramilitary Provisional IRA, had urged Charles to "choose a suitable, attractive and sweet-charactered girl *before* she met anyone else she might fall for". It was Diana's tragedy to be chosen for what she did not have – experience, any sign of independent opinions – rather than for any more positive qualities.

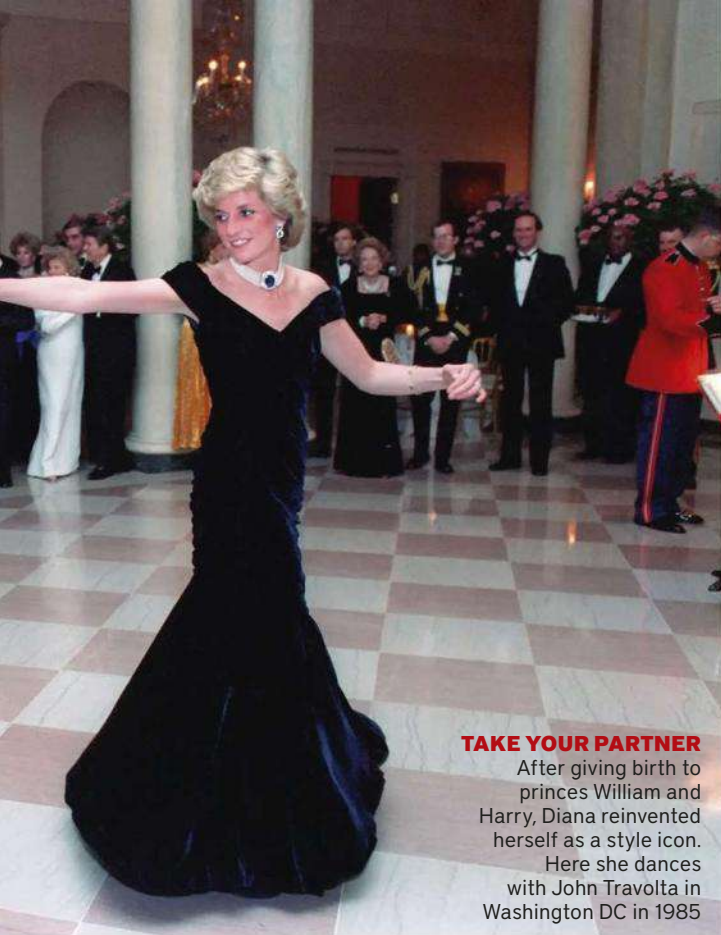
Not that Diana was reluctant; she actively sought the prince's interest. Unhappy at home, thanks to her parents' bitter divorce and her father's remarriage to the daughter



of the romantic novelist Barbara Cartland, she was looking for her path in life. Without a qualification to her name ("thick", she cheerfully called herself), marriage was the obvious option. That autumn the press spotted Diana sitting beside Charles as he fished the river Dee. Immediately they took up the tale of 'Shy Di', the aristocratic English rose, so modestly working as a kindergarten assistant. Her uncle Lord Fermoy assured the press she was a virgin; her biographer Andrew Morton would write that she knew she had to "keep myself tidy". There have been few high-profile women in the modern western world who were chosen so exclusively for what was valued in their forebears: virginity, aristocracy and fertility.

The engagement was announced on 24 February 1981, Charles telling a friend he wanted to do "the right thing for this country". There is also another quote that sums up his position as neatly. Of course, the pair were in love, "whatever 'in love' means", he told reporters, while Diana smiled shyly.

Few high-profile women in the modern western world were chosen so exclusively for what was valued in their forebears – virginity, aristocracy and fertility



TAKE YOUR PARTNER

After giving birth to princes William and Harry, Diana reinvented herself as a style icon. Here she dances with John Travolta in Washington DC in 1985

With hindsight, it feels now as if everyone should have seen trouble ahead. But most didn't, actually. On the contrary, the couple – both of whom were later revealed to have had qualms – were pushed into commitment by the united desires not only of their family, but of press and public. "Here was a fairy story that everyone wanted to work," Diana later noted, ruefully.

The couple were married in St Paul's Cathedral in London on 29 July 1981 in a show-stopping public ceremony. The Queen was only one of those who felt that at a time of unemployment, rioting and IRA violence, it would cheer up the country – just as her own wedding had done, in the aftermath of war. The guest list was heavy on foreign notables and the bride chose the hymn *I Vow to Thee My Country*.

Prince Charles later told the TV presenter Jonathan Dimbleby that it was on honeymoon on board the royal yacht *Britannia* that he first learned Diana suffered from the eating disorder bulimia. The press and public saw a different side of the story. Almost immediately, at the beginning of November, the Palace announced that the Princess of Wales was pregnant.

When Prince William was born on 21 June 1982, Diana said later that she had "felt the whole country was in labour with me". Their second son, Prince Harry,



QUEEN OF HEARTS

Diana, pictured here in 1989, wished to be seen as "a queen of people's hearts"



"THERE WERE THREE OF US IN THIS MARRIAGE"

Diana's revelatory interview for *Panorama* in 1995 took 200 million worldwide TV viewers into the heart of royal affairs

followed in September 1984 – but the two parents' approach to their families would come to dramatise the differences between them. There were famous photographs of Diana, warmheartedly flying to hug her sons after a separation, which contrasted with the image of a young Prince Charles, exchanging a solemn handshake with his mother, the Queen, after she returned from a long royal tour.

After the birth of both sons, Diana's transformation from dowdy posh girl into glamorous icon began. Blond, blue-eyed and ever more stylish, she evoked the romantic image of the fairytale princess. By the tour of the US in 1985 – where Diana danced with John Travolta – she was, so *Reader's Digest* declared afterwards: "The World's Number One Celebrity." And – though she →

would famously later complain that there were three in her marriage, thinking of her husband's affair with his future second wife, Camilla Parker Bowles – Diana too had begun to look elsewhere. Her bodyguard and close confidant Barry Mannakee was transferred to other duties; when he died in a motorcycle accident, Diana, foreshadowing the conspiracy theories that would follow her own death, believed he had been killed, presumably by the British security services. In 1986, she met army officer James Hewitt and, by the end of their 18-month affair – when Diana returned instead to a former flame, James Gilbey – the royal marriage had effectively foundered.

The end was nigh. When, in 1992, the couple were persuaded to tour India together, Diana had herself photographed, ostentatiously alone, in front of the Taj Mahal. The same year, Andrew Morton's biography, *Diana: Her True Story In Her Own Words*, provoked a hostile questioning of many aspects of the monarchy. At the end of what the Queen called her *annus horribilis* – her horrible year – Buckingham Palace announced that “with regret, the Prince and Princess of Wales have decided to separate”, but that “their constitutional positions are unaffected”. It was hard to see how that could be.

Within weeks came ‘Camillagate’, the published transcript of a deeply embarrassing conversation between Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles. After that, the ‘Squidgygate’ tapes of Diana's conversation with James Gilbey seemed positively tame, notable chiefly for Diana's words: “After all I've done for this fucking family.” Diana, now, was the saint – visiting hospices and orphanages, embracing lepers and Aids victims, getting 10 times the press coverage that was given to Charles's activities. She was winning the publicity war – and never more so than on television.

In the summer of 1994, Charles's interview with Jonathan Dimbleby was televised, in which he admitted infidelity and revealed both a lack of sympathy for Diana (shown as “nothing more than a hired womb”, in the words of American biographer Kitty Kelley) and a worrying distance from his family. The programme and Dimbleby's subsequent book inflicted

another injury on the already wounded monarchy, described by even the far-from-radical publication *The Economist* as “an idea whose time has passed”.

Diana was following in a time-honoured line of rebellious royal consorts. On the grand scale, Eleanor of Aquitaine and Isabella of France had both conspired against their spouses for rule of the country. But a closer comparison – albeit one unflattering to Diana – would have to be with Caroline of Brunswick, wife of George IV. Unappealing to her husband and seeking consolation elsewhere – itself the subject of an extraordinary public investigation into her morals – Caroline was turned away from the doors of her husband's coronation.

There was, of course, an echo of the threat that Diana represented closer at hand, one from earlier on in the 20th century. Eyeing both the Princess of Wales and Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York – and recalling the abdication of her brother-in-law Edward VIII over his relationship with the scorned Mrs Simpson – the Queen Mother is reported to have noted: “It's Wallis all over again.”

As she became ever more alienated from the royal family, Diana's own increasingly eccentric behaviour (nuisance calls, rumoured affairs and New Age therapies) was also being discussed widely and crudely. She struck back. The interview with Martin Bashir on the current affairs TV show *Panorama* – aired on 20 November 1995 and watched by some 200 million worldwide – is still shocking today. Casting doubt on Charles's ability to be king, Diana said that her aspiration was not to be queen of England, but “a queen of people's hearts”. Within weeks, the Queen suggested the Wales should divorce – and quickly.

As Diana moved through middle age, would divorced life have represented an opening or a closing of doors for her? Her year as a divorced woman witnessed controversial relationships with surgeon Hasnat Khan and Harrods heir Dodi Fayed, but it also saw the anti-landmines campaign which stands as her lasting memorial. But the events of 31 August 1997 put an end to the possibilities. Diana's death in Paris prompted an extraordinary outpouring of public grief and a commensurate hostility

IN THE DANGER ZONE

Diana's post-divorce work for anti-landmine charities remains a chief part of her legacy



OUTPOURING OF GRIEF

An ocean of flowers outside Diana's Kensington Palace home marks her sudden passing in 1997



towards the only people who appeared not to care: the royal family.

In the febrile climate of blame – the tears in the street, the mounds of flowers outside her Kensington Palace home, the funeral in Westminster Abbey – it was prime minister Tony Blair who found the popular tribute. Diana had been, he said, “the people’s princess”. And yet, within a comparatively short space of time, royal popularity was climbing again, slowly.

In part that was down to a new generation: Diana’s sons. But the older royals, too, had been kickstarted into some adjustment to changing public moralities. On her golden jubilee in 2002, the Queen invited Camilla Parker Bowles to the ceremony. Prince Charles’s happy second marriage is in part his first wife’s legacy. And whatever the short-term effect on the royal family’s popularity, in the long term the Diana story, with its tragic end, may have restored our sense of their humanity.

Without Diana’s wide-eyed appealing presence, the difficulties she caused – as well as those she endured – show up more clearly. It remains true that there is a whole generation of women for whom Diana to some degree symbolised their own challenges. Ironically, providing a unifying symbol for our national concerns has always been the role of the royal family.

Since her death, Diana has been portrayed as a victim whose legend still sets her above her oppressors. It’s a popular way to view the women of history. But perhaps the time has come to think about setting that aside – to retain the late Princess of Wales as, above all, an icon of 20th-century celebrity, at once both confessional and celebratory. The combination of glamour and accessibility that Diana injected into the royal family has given it new options for the present day. And, looking at the next generation, her mantle shows no sign of being immediately put away. ■

With her behaviour, Diana was following in a time-honoured line of rebellious royal consorts

TO THE RESCUE

Coming from the British middle classes, Kate Middleton has brought the royal family closer to the people after years of scandal and bad press

OPPOSITE PAGE:

As Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, she is every bit the composed and modern royal



KATE MIDDLETON

A MODERN ROYAL WOMAN

SARAH GRISTWOOD explains how Prince William's bride has continued a historical tradition of 'commoner' princesses, in the process transforming the royal family

In November 2010, when the marriage of His Royal Highness Prince William of Wales and Miss Catherine Middleton was announced, it looked as though the modern age had finally hit the monarchy. So it had, in a way, with the man second in line to the throne marrying a woman rooted firmly in the British middle classes.

But, in another way, the match follows the tradition of centuries. Royal marriages always used to be about cementing an alliance – historically, with some foreign power. The difference is that, in the 21st century, it's an alliance with the British people the royal family needs most urgently.

Catherine Elizabeth Middleton was born on 9 January 1982, the eldest of three children to businessman Michael and former air hostess Carole. She grew up in a village in Berkshire and was educated at a series of privately funded schools before taking a degree in History of Art at the University of St Andrews, where she met Prince William in 2001. The pair's relationship is said to have begun in 2003. In 2007, they split up, but not for long. The engagement announcement came three years later and they were married on 29 April 2011.

Her independent working life, outside her parents' company Party

Pieces, was limited to a year as a part-time accessory buyer for the Jigsaw clothes chain. But though the absence of any real previous career may represent a gap in her credentials as a contemporary woman, it did mean that, once she married and became Duchess of Cambridge, she was free to throw herself into that job. "Didn't she do well?" trumpeted the press after the Canadian royal tour in 2011. Most of its readers will have felt they shared her success, at least vicariously.

More than 2 billion people worldwide are estimated to have watched the wedding (as opposed to some 750 million for the wedding of William's parents Charles and Diana). The mood was overwhelmingly inclusive. The bishop of London declared that "in a sense every wedding is a royal wedding with the bride and groom as king and queen of creation". The guest list expressly eliminated foreign dignitaries to make way for such old friends as the landlord of the Old Boot Inn near Kate's home village of Bucklebury.

When the first of their two children, Prince George, was born on 22 July 2013, the customary formal announcement was placed on an easel outside Buckingham Palace. The next day, Prince William, having taken paternity leave from his then job as a Royal Air Force search-and-rescue helicopter pilot, was seen

strapping his son into a baby seat before driving his new family down to Kate's parents' home – and privacy. Kate may inevitably have become a media magnet of immense proportions. But – a few significant press intrusions apart – she seems to be managing it her way.

She is a living symbol of the fact that lessons have been learnt – that no future royal will be forced, as Prince Charles was, to marry for a bride's superficial suitability. Where Diana had been the last in a centuries-long line of virginal, sacrificial royal brides, her son's match had to be a love story.

But there is some history of commoner brides within the royal family. Edward IV made a love match with Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of a mere knight, while only two of Henry VIII's six wives came from European ruling families. All the same, the advent of Kate Middleton is still something of a novelty.

When the future George IV underwent a ceremony of marriage with Mrs Fitzherbert in 1795, he was able to do so only in the understanding that any child of the marriage could not succeed their father. Several decades earlier, the future James II (James VII in Scotland) was a mere second son when he married Anne Hyde, because he had made her pregnant. By contrast Kate Middleton married a man who is scheduled to be king. Everyone knew her bloodline will carry forward the monarchy.

The old definition of commoner was anyone not from a royal family, rather than someone who is common or ordinary. In those terms, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (the future mother of Elizabeth II) was a

The wedding's guest list expressly eliminated foreign dignitaries to make way for old friends, like the landlord of Kate's local pub



THE HAPPY COUPLE Kate and William – and a clearly annoyed bridesmaid – appear on the balcony at Buckingham Palace on their wedding day to hear the cheers of the tens of thousands of well-wishers gathered outside the palace's grounds



LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM The young couple pose on the day of their graduation from the University of St Andrews in 2005. Kate studied art history, while William's main subject was geography



GOING WALKABOUT Kate has proven herself to be a worthy ambassador while on official duty, such as here when charming crowds on a royal tour of Australia in 2014

Commoner consorts

Despite causing scandal and provoking hostility, several royal men found their brides outside blue-blood circles



◀ Katherine Swynford

(c1350–1403)

When Edward III's son John of Gaunt wed Katherine Swynford in 1396, she had already been his mistress for around 25 years and had borne him several children. Those Beaufort children later became legitimate, but their right to the throne remained debatable. Nonetheless, their descendants sit on the throne today.

Elizabeth Woodville

(c1437–92) ▶

It caused a scandal when the new Yorkist king Edward IV made a secret love match with the widow of a mere Lancastrian knight, but there was propaganda value in the alliance. She was blamed for the extensive hold her family gained on the country, but the marriage was undoubtedly happy.



◀ Anne Boleyn (c1501–36)

The question of Anne Boleyn's rank was overshadowed by the far greater scandal of the lengths to which Henry VIII went to marry her. His efforts to free himself from his first marriage led to England's break with Rome. Anne remains – like her daughter Elizabeth I – one of the most debated figures in history.



Camilla Parker Bowles (1947–) ▶

The 2005 marriage of Prince Charles to the divorced Mrs Parker Bowles was likewise controversial, less because of her antecedents than her marital status – and the distress the pair's long affair had caused to Charles's wife Diana. It has been said the Duchess of Cornwall has no wish to assume the position of queen, but her stateliness during the last decade has done much to reduce public hostility.



commoner and, while her 1923 marriage to the future George VI – another second son – met with widespread approval, it was still seen as innovatory.

But a number of earlier commoner brides were not in fact such outsiders as might appear. Elizabeth Woodville's father might have been a mere knight, but her mother, Jacquetta, sprang from the ruling house of Luxembourg. Henry VIII's second wife, Anne Boleyn, (like her cousin Catherine Howard, Henry's fifth wife) was a granddaughter of the Duke of Norfolk. Kate and William are actually 14th cousins once removed, but it's still something new to find manual labourers within living memory on her mother's side of the family tree.

The Queen's younger children, like her sister Princess Margaret, have all made non-royal and, indeed, non-aristocratic marriages, albeit to those who moved in royal circles. Then again, the British aristocracy, and the royal family too, have always maintained their vigour on a steady supply of fresh blood. Witness here the *Downton Abbey*-style influx of 'dollar princesses' – American heiresses marrying into the British aristocracy – around the turn of the last century. The affection in which the Queen Mother was held paved the way for non-royal brides ahead. And the new wave of royal brides are important – perhaps more so than ever in the new, feminised climate of the 21st century.

The media furore around Kate might look like that around Diana, Princess of Wales. The concern of Prince William – and of Buckingham Palace, of course – has been to ensure



MODERN FAMILY

The laid-back Kate and William with the newly born Prince George. The baby was instantly third in line to the throne

it never takes on the same destructive edge. But that cuts both ways. In the years of Diana's long estrangement from Prince Charles, every story about her was essentially a story against the monarchy. That's not how it plays today, with the royals' new media star singing from the same hymn sheet as the rest of the family.

Kate is a willing and able new recruit to what her husband's grandfather Prince Philip famously called "the firm". Her impressive contribution to the family's popularity may be more valuable than ever in the years ahead if, as has been suggested, Prince William's surface geniality with the press masks a deep and understandable hostility.

In one sense, Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge is a throwback: a young woman waiting years for that wedding ring, a consort apparently content with that role. As such, in modern terms, she is an anomaly. But the point is that as an educated, 21st-century woman, free from any constraints of family, she had far

more options than her predecessors – and went ahead with this choice anyway. Where Diana gave the impression of never having understood just what she was getting into, this was a career for which Kate had signed up even before the proposal. Perhaps she knew that, this time around, the balance of power would be poised more equitably.

When a friend once commented how lucky Kate was to be going out with William, she is said to have quipped back: "He's lucky to be going out with me." The point is, the feeling was reciprocal, and echoed by William's family. "We are so lucky to have her," Prince Charles told wedding guests. Since then, there has been nothing since to make the royal family think any other way.

The British, it is said, like their

queens: this may be truer than ever today. The role of the modern constitutional monarch may even be one that a woman can occupy more easily. The Queen's function is that which the poet William Wordsworth ascribed to the perfect woman – "to warn, to comfort, and command". Effectively, she is mother of the nation; the authoritarian image of a father figure may not play as readily.

Despite the recent changes to the rules of succession – decreeing that, had William and Kate's first child been a girl, she would have taken precedence over a younger brother – the next three monarchs are likely to be male. This makes it all the more important that they should learn to accept a consort's influence – and gratefully. ■

Kate is a willing and able new recruit to what Prince Philip famously called "the firm"

THE FUTURE GEORGE VII
Prince George, currently third in line to the British throne, visits the Natural History Museum in London with his parents, Prince William and Kate, Duchess of Cambridge





MOMENTOUS ROYAL BIRTHS

With the British royal family growing all the time, **KATE WILLIAMS** traces the monarchy's quest to produce successors – from Edward V to Princess Charlotte – down the centuries

1 The “poor man’s child”

After his father was overthrown, Edward V began life in less-than-royal conditions

The first son of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, Edward V of England was born at a turbulent time. His parents had married secretly in 1464, much to the horror of the court, for Elizabeth was of common blood. A few years after her coronation, her father and brother were captured in battle and executed by relatives of the king.

By 1470, Edward was deposed – and Elizabeth was pregnant. She took sanctuary in Westminster

Abbey where, on 2 November, she gave birth to a son, Edward, in privation and insecurity. Instead of the blaring of trumpets and rejoicing across the land, his birth was received quietly and he was baptised in the abbey “like a poor man’s child”.

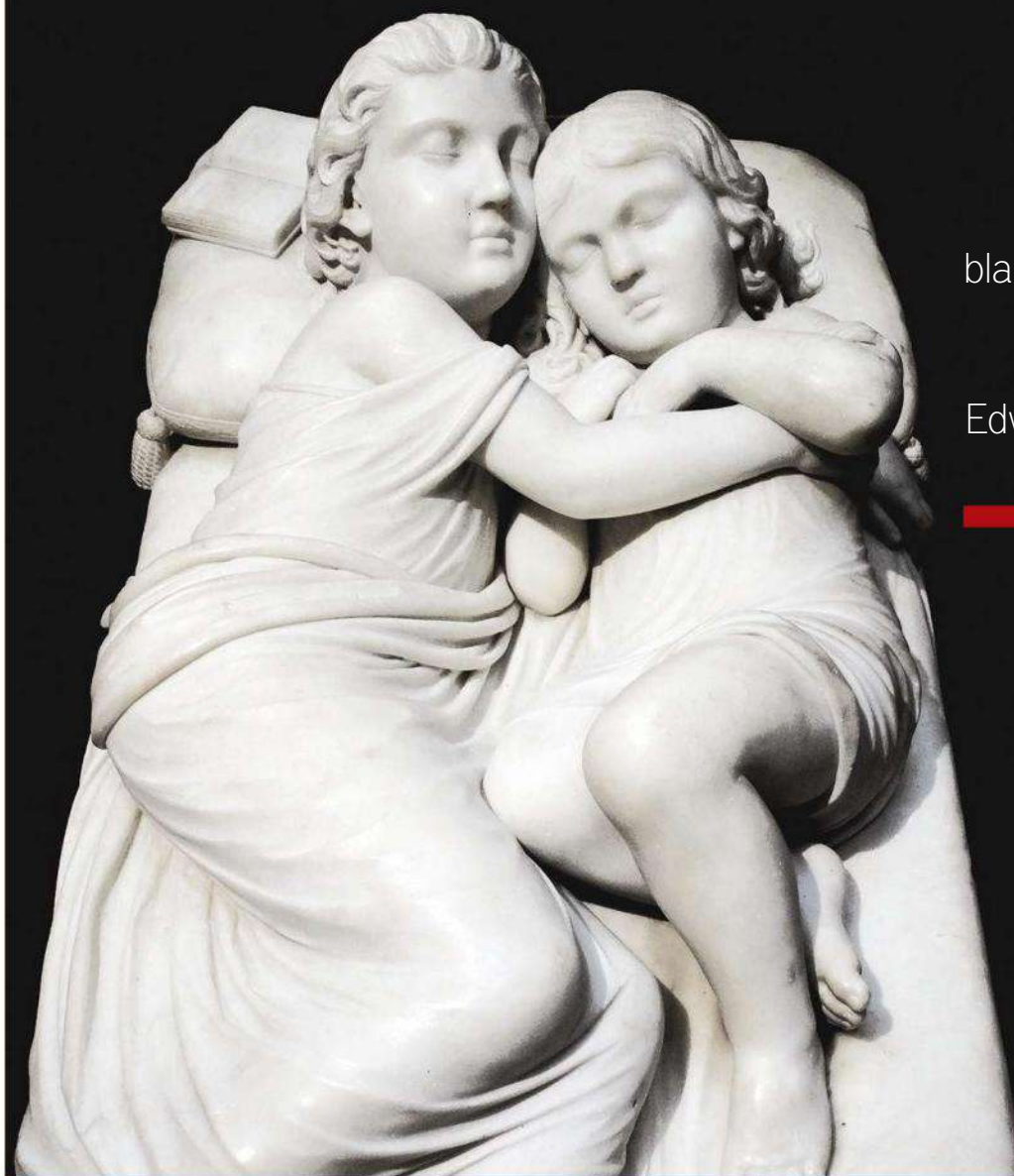
In 1471, Edward IV was restored to the throne and his son became Prince of Wales and was placed at Ludlow Castle near the England/Wales border. On 9 April 1483, Edward IV died and his son – the new

Edward V – travelled to London, but he was put into the Tower with his brother and his coronation postponed. It was announced that his father had been already betrothed when he married Elizabeth, making Edward illegitimate. His uncle was then declared king – Richard III.

Edward and his brother soon disappeared from view entirely in what became the most famous mystery of British history: who killed the princes in the Tower?

Instead of the blaring of trumpets and rejoicing across the land, Edward’s birth was received quietly

Edward V and his younger brother Richard were imprisoned in the Tower of London and never seen again, prompting suspicion that they had been murdered





England celebrated when Jane Seymour gave birth to a long-awaited male heir, but Edward VI was to survive his father by just six years

2 The long-awaited heir

In 1537, Henry VIII finally got the son he craved

Henry VIII had tried everything to sire an heir. After two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, produced by Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn respectively, the court was praying for a boy. The pressure to produce one now rested on the shoulders of Jane Seymour, Henry's third wife.

In September 1537, Jane was confined to her room at Hampton Court, west of London, and, after a difficult three-day labour, gave Henry the boy he needed at 2am on 12 October. That night, 2,000 gunshots were fired from the Tower of London and church bells rang. The king was overjoyed, holding him up to show the court. Baby Edward was baptised three days later, with both his half sisters carrying the train of his christening gown.

While Henry celebrated, Jane's health deteriorated. The labour had left the queen critically ill and she died less than two weeks after giving birth. Though the son she'd given her life to produce did accede to the English throne – as King Edward VI in 1547 – he died just six years later, aged 15.

3 The people's hope

Princess Charlotte was the only legitimate option

George III had 13 surviving children, none of which seemed particularly keen on marriage. In the face of these dynasty-wrecking antics, the king's patience snapped and his son, Prince George, grudgingly agreed to marry his cousin, Caroline of Brunswick. Their first meeting was a disaster and the prince later spent the wedding night with his head in the grate, drunk. Soon after, the pair separated.

Somehow, though, Caroline fell pregnant and, in January 1796, the prince wrote that his wife had delivered an

"immense girl" after "a terrible hard labour". They named her Charlotte. Even though he had wished for a boy, Prince George "received her with all the affection possible". The couple were briefly reconciled – but then the prince returned to his mistresses.

George III's children produced around 56 illegitimate offspring but, in 1796, Charlotte was the one legitimate child. She soon became the nation's hope to produce a male heir. Yet these hopes were cruelly dashed when she died within hours of giving birth to a stillborn son.

Princess Charlotte with her mother, Caroline, whose marriage to the future George IV hit the rocks within a matter of days





In 1926, a time of social strife, Britain united in celebrating the birth of Princess Elizabeth

4 The distraction

The future Elizabeth II brought joy in troubled times

On the eve of Britain's general strike in 1926, the home secretary, William Joynson-Hicks, had much to do. Confirming the legitimacy of the royal baby was not uppermost in his mind. But it was the task of the home secretary to do so; all births in the line to the throne had long been attended by politicians to verify the child had been properly born of the mother.

He travelled to Bruton Street in central London, where Elizabeth, the Duchess of York and wife of the second son of George V, was in labour in her parents' home. A little girl was born by caesarean section at 2.40am on 21 April 1926, healthy and pretty. "I do hope that you & Papa are as delighted as we are to have a

granddaughter, or would you sooner have had a grandson?" the Duke of York wrote to his mother, Queen Mary. "I know Elizabeth wanted a daughter."

Despite the social unrest, crowds cheered outside the house and the royal birth was received joyously across Britain. Joynson-Hicks dashed back to a meeting with mine owners.

Queen Mary called the child "a little darling with a lovely complexion". As daughter of the king's younger son, she was not expected to attain the throne. As it turned out, history would have a very different role for Elizabeth to the one anticipated at the baby's birth.

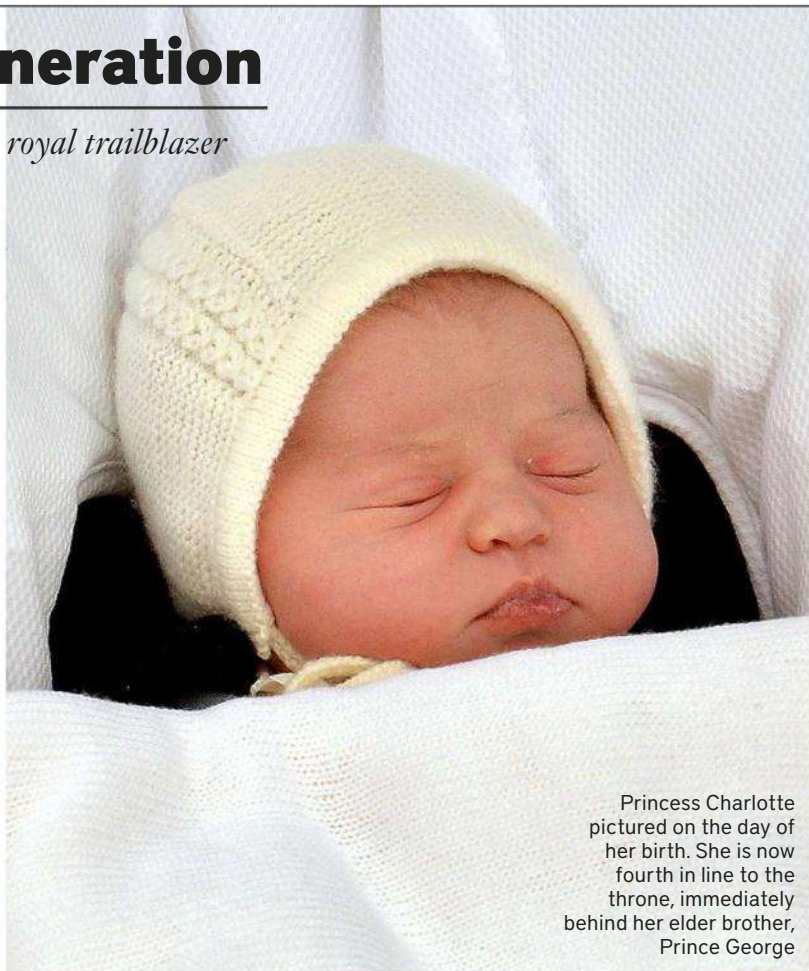
5 The next generation

Princess Charlotte: a young royal trailblazer

Saturday 2 May 2015 marked the beginning of a bright new chapter in the royal family's long history as Prince William and Kate Middleton emerged from St Mary's Hospital in London – before a sea of reporters, cameras and well-wishers – clutching in their arms their new daughter, Princess Charlotte Elizabeth Diana.

Charlotte is fourth in line to the throne – behind her elder brother, George, who was born in July 2013. In fact, the young princess is already something of a trailblazer – for, thanks to the change to the succession law that came into effect in March 2015, she cannot be displaced in the line of succession by any younger brothers. ■

Charlotte's birth marked the beginning of a new chapter in royal history



Princess Charlotte pictured on the day of her birth. She is now fourth in line to the throne, immediately behind her elder brother, Prince George

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ROYAL WOMEN

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Read Anna's articles on Bloody Mary on page 16, and Elizabeth I on page 24.

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Kate Williams is the author of *Becoming Queen* (Arrow, 2009) and *Young Elizabeth* (Pegasus, 2015). Kate writes about Queen Victoria on page 36, Elizabeth II on page 44 and royal babies on page 110.

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ROYAL WOMEN

EXPERT VIEWS ON BRITAIN'S QUEENS AND
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*“Mary was the Tudor trailblazer,
a political pioneer whose reign redefined
the English monarchy.”*

HISTORIAN ANNA WHITELOCK ON 'BLOODY MARY' TUDOR

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